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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7940th meeting

Tuesday, 16 May 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
France	Mrs. Audouard
Italy	Mr. Cardi
Japan	Mr. Kawamura
Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Mr. Skoog
Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Hickey
United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/387, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: The Security Council has before it the report (S/2017/387) of the Secretary-General covering the period of January to April 2017. Much has transpired since the reporting period ended on 15 April, and I will share the main facts and some observations about the more recent developments.

The last quarter witnessed fluctuating tensions and fragility; however, the situation remains generally stable. Escalation has been avoided in several instances as a result of external diplomatic interventions, but the necessary level of trust in Pristina and Belgrade has been further eroded by a number of irresponsible and inflammatory statements. Both sides have repeatedly

accused one another of provocation whereas the process of normalization of relations requires cooperation.

The decision to call an early parliamentary election in Kosovo in June following the collapse of the governing alliance, and the lines painstakingly forged in 2014 were a significant development. The outcome of the election may draw a different future for Kosovo. The next Government, regardless of its composition, will nonetheless continue to face numerous pressing challenges. Elections provide opportunities for the renewal of political will and direction, as well as for greater diversity in leadership and representation — for example, greater engagement with youth.

I must express my shock, shared by many in Kosovo, at the attack this past weekend on Arbana Xharra, a prominent media figure who recently entered electoral politics. Regardless of the motives of the perpetrators, I cannot sufficiently stress the importance of a swift and full investigation, this terrible incident having taken place at the outset of the political campaign.

It is my responsibility to inform the Council of progress made and the challenges that remain, identifying dangers and dissecting the complexities of the current situation. It is important to note that the Mitrovica wall dispute was resolved peacefully through negotiations, and that the initial determination to form a Kosovo army via legislative amendments has calmed. However, the relations between Pristina and Belgrade are still not at ease. The frequent electoral cycles are part of a continuum of distraction that is not helping to advance the European Union-led dialogue or the implementation of its central agreements, such as the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. In practical terms, the dialogue has been at a standstill for some months now; its resumption is of the greatest importance.

Besides the limited progress seen in the dialogue process, public communications during this reporting period unfortunately slid back into intolerant and ethno-nationalist sloganeering. This tendency should be followed closely and is a matter of deep concern. Instead of elaborating on this trend, I would like to review what we have heard from different leaders during this period.

In relation to Serbia's request for the extradition from France of Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the political party Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, prior to the decision of the French authorities, the Kosovo

Assembly, on 9 March, adopted a resolution calling for suspension of the European Union-facilitated dialogue with Belgrade until Mr. Haradinaj had been released. It is hoped that the resolution will now be rescinded.

In a television interview in early April, prominent Assembly Member Daut Haradinaj, the brother of Ramush Haradinaj, warned of an "ethnically clean Kosovo" if judicial authorities in France were to rule in favour of Serbia's extradition request for his brother. Upon his return to Kosovo, on 27 April, Ramush Haradinaj himself referred to Serbia's extradition request as "a call to war", referred to the "enemy, Serbia" and threatened "we will do to them far worse than we did back then," referring to the highest point of the war, in 1999. Outgoing Serbian President Nikolić compared Haradinaj to a "rabid dog that has tasted human flesh".

Such statements directly and negatively affect the atmosphere among the communities in Kosovo. Are these responsible statements? Such incitements to hatred fall outside the realm of civil political discourse. They throw us into a situation where, as has been said, reason would be consumed in the flames of irresponsible and unnecessary behaviour.

Another issue that has received a great deal of attention is the question of regional and subregional unions, should the enlargement of the European Union stall. Again, I will report to the Council on what we have heard from different leaders during the reporting period.

In a mid-April interview the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, stated,

"[e]veryone would like to unite in the big union. But if there is no hope, no perspective, no space, then, of course, smaller unions may happen".

Other politicians seized the moment to shape this statement into an expression of nationalist intent. President Hashim Thaçi remarked,

"[if] the EU continues with the delay and the unclear approach", then "all Albanians in the region will live in one unified State in order to proceed with integration into the European family". The President of Serbia's National Council of Albanians went further, saying, "now is a key moment for Albania and Kosovo to show Serbia that this is a part of Albania that must not be touched", referring to mixed-ethnicity municipalities in southern Serbia.

In reaction, Serbian Cabinet Minister Aleksandar Vulin stated that Greater Albania "can only be accomplished by a great Balkan war". He further stated that

"Albanians must be aware that they will have to fight their own wars and that they will pay for the wars Haradinaj is trying to cause with the heads of their own children".

Whatever the real intent behind such remarks, some issues have moved from a more academic or semi-academic debate to the political level. Such suggestions can also fuel fears and tensions and lead to something much worse. One must ask, what place does such rhetoric have in 2017? What should any person, be they Albanian or Serb, make of such statements? Such language and such thinking produces real effects on the ground.

There were a notable cluster of security incidents centred on the city of Mitrovica, including physical assaults, including some in which weapons were used. Under the important agreements brokered by the European Union, a long-anticipated and positive development is the expected opening of the city's main bridge to vehicular traffic. Yet in the current climate, expectations are tinged with anxiety and fear, rather than optimism.

Constructive engagement continues to be possible, and we witness this fact on the ground every day. I have continued meeting municipal and community leaders throughout all parts of Kosovo. In this past quarter, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with municipal mayors in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Pristina, north Mitrovica and south Mitrovica. I witnessed real commitment to promoting cooperation between the communities and to resolving real issues in the daily lives and needs of people. I have been exposed not to political rhetoric, but rather to serious work aimed at building a tolerant and inclusive society.

Particularly encouraging is the establishment, by the associations of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb families of missing persons of a shared resource centre. Supported by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the centre brings the families of missing persons together to encourage dialogue and common efforts. The missing persons issue is an open wound that inhibits societal reconciliation, but I have been struck by the spirit of unity at the centre, which is calling for better

performance by politicians and public institutions in both Belgrade and in Pristina in order to bring answers to those who have already suffered too long without such answers.

On 15 March, UNMIK hosted a Global Open Day on Women and Peace and Security, which convened more than 100 dignitaries, journalists and political and civil society leaders to foment a debate about the role of women in societal reconciliation. The event's keynote address was delivered by former Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga. We were highly impressed by the diversity of the participants and the constructive manner in which they were willing and able to discuss difficult issues. We will continue to support women who take courageous stands to shape a better future for Kosovo.

Furthermore, UNMIK has worked to implement resolution 2250 (2015), focusing on youth. On 11 May, UNMIK hosted the second in a series of meetings entitled "Stories from the other side", which brings together young people from Kosovo's diverse communities. Identifying their shared perspective, they come up with new ideas for tackling current social problems in Kosovo.

I wish to make special mention of the efforts of the EU Special Representative in Kosovo aimed at reinvigorating the Implementation and Monitoring Council for the protection of cultural heritage, which reconvened during this reporting period after a long hiatus. This mechanism is crucial for implementation of the Law on the Special Protective Zones and is a platform for discussion of the full range of issues in the area of protecting cultural heritage. Included among those is the continuing obstruction by the Deçan/Dečani authorities of the Kosovo Constitutional Court's ruling on property belonging to the Visoki Dečani Orthodox Monastery. The central authorities have yet to cancel the procedure for privatizing the formerly disputed land, despite the clear legal decision by Kosovo's highest court.

Improving the situation in Kosovo and the region requires leadership that transcends ethno-national divisions, rather than amplify them. Overcoming such destructive challenges is the European spirit to which all regional actors aspire. I hope the members of the Council can continue to use their considerable influence to encourage democratic institutions to serve the real needs of the people and to encourage leaders in Belgrade

and Pristina to proceed with visionary dialogue, in their own and their people's true common interest.

Our Mission continues to work to support those ends with all our means and in full partnership and cooperation with local and international partners. The Council's authority remains absolutely indispensable for ensuring accountability and for recognizing the leaders who understand that their political success is measured through the well-being of the people.

I take this opportunity once again to thank all members of the Council for their ongoing support of our Mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Ms. Kuburović (Serbia): I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his engagement in the implementation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) mandate under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and the members of the Council for their attention to this issue. I wish to underline the importance of continued Council meetings on this topic every three months — in the context of contributing to the creation of conditions for the unimpeded implementation of the UNMIK mandate and supporting the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina with the facilitation of the European Union (EU).

Serbia attaches particular importance to the work of UNMIK and believes that the Mission requires adequate personnel and an increase in staff and financing if it is to meet all the needs related to the implementation of its mandate. At the same time, we are aware that the Mission is operating in an unfriendly environment, often characterized by the animosity of the Albanian community. It is in those terms that we understand UNMIK's endeavours to portray the situation on the ground in more moderate tones, refraining from assessments that would inevitably have to be very critical of Pristina, which in turn could lead to erroneous and simplified conclusions.

Despite numerous challenges, Serbia continues to participate in the dialogue in a constructive, responsible and dedicated way, with the aim of addressing outstanding issues within a status-neutral framework, contributing to the stabilization of the situation and

creating the ideal conditions to facilitate EU membership for the Western Balkans. Pristina's treatment of the dialogue and the process of normalization of relations as a means of blackmailing Serbian and its European partners is unacceptable. Such an attitude culminated at the beginning of March, when its Assembly adopted a resolution on suspending the dialogue tying it, *de facto*, to the destiny of one person, who has been charged with committing the most heinous crimes. That was followed by the overt threats of regional Albanian political leaders of redrawing borders and creating the so-called "greater Albania", unless their ambitions regarding European integration are met expeditiously.

Despite the fact that the agreement on the establishment of an association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo constitutes the most important part of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations and is the key question for the survival of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, no significant progress was made on that matter during the reporting period. The problem will not be resolved by sporadic public criticisms of Pristina made in the West. It is necessary to hear the unified voice of our European partners and the voices of the members of the Security Council demanding that Pristina expeditiously fulfil its commitments association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. Similarly, the Republic of Serbia stresses the importance of holding quarterly Council meetings to send a message to both sides, especially Pristina, that agreements are not and cannot be dead letters. Empty words no longer suffice; specific acts must follow.

Serbia is genuinely committed to the preservation of peace. Its primary interest is to save the lives and protect the property of all residents of the province, and to enable the sustainable return of internally displaced persons. Regrettably, we must note that the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija is quite ill-suited in that regard — a fact that is also borne out by Secretary-General reports. The absence of a proper systematic response by the Pristina institutions to the multiple problems facing non-Albanian communities, as well as an intensive anti-Serbian campaign, has contributed to continuing ethnically motivated attacks against the Serbs. A case in point is the recent horrifying threat by Daut Haradinaj, a member of the Assembly of Kosovo from the opposition party Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, that not a single living Serb will remain in Kosovo and Metohija if the results of the proceedings

against his brother, Ramush Haradinaj, are contrary to the wishes of the Albanians. Mr. Tanin's reaction to that statement was commendable. Moreover, the justice system in Kosovo and Metohija must not remain silent in the face of hate speech and new threats regarding the ethnic cleansing of the remaining Serbs.

There can be no genuine reconciliation without the prosecution of all crimes, without exception, nor if there is unwillingness to hold perpetrators within one's own ranks accountable. The fact that not a single killer of any of about 1,000 Serbs killed since the end of the conflict has been convicted with a legally enforceable sentence speaks for itself. That cannot be the path to genuine reconciliation; it leads only to the simulacrum of reconciliation, as directed by the promoters of the Kosovo project.

Impunity for crimes must not be allowed or tolerated. The entire United Nations membership is being challenged; it must show that law and justice are above politics and that all victims are equal. It is exactly for that reason that we consider the decision of the French court of Colmar to refuse to extradite Ramush Haradinaj — a man suspected of the most serious war crimes — shameful, illegal and scandalous. The court did not present any fact to prove that the requirements of the 1957 European Convention on Extradition, ratified both by France and Serbia, have not been fulfilled. The court decision is a violation of the universal principles of international law on preventing impunity for war crimes, while its contention that the extradition of Ramush Haradinaj to Serbia would have very serious consequences for him is unacceptable and unfounded.

Outrageous crimes and atrocities committed against Serbian civilians, as well as against unloyal Albanians, committed by the terrorist organization Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), one of whose leaders was Ramush Haradinaj, are frightening, to say the least. The testimony of brutal and repeated rapes, torture, beating and ruthless killings by KLA members are shocking. All those who believe that the decision of the French court is a victory for the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija are wrong. It is not they who are the victors, but crime, and it is not our defeat, but the defeat of law and justice. For the sake of the victims, it is our moral obligation to continue our fight for justice and truth. We shall not give up; our victims are no less valuable.

Yet the message of that politically motivated decision and of those who welcomed the criminal Ramush Haradinaj to Pristina with fireworks is that the killing of Serbs is not and should not be punishable. Albanian political leaders in Pristina must finally understand that punishing war criminals is part of the process of normalizing relations, and that backing a man who is suspected of crimes against the Serbs and the Roma, as well as against his own compatriots, only serves to widen the inter-ethnic gap in Kosovo and Metohija and to undermine the rule of law and democracy for residents of the province.

As if the crimes committed in 1998 and 1999 had not sufficed, Ramush Haradinaj continues to make new threats — to seize the territory of Serbia and rewrite its constitution by force. Moreover, he promises that if the United States will not help, then the Albanians will finish the job themselves. I would recall that everything in Kosovo and Metohija began with the lies told by people such as William Walker; today he does not even bother to conceal his affinity for greater Albania ambitions and projects. He is also known to oppose the Specialist Chambers, established to try the crimes committed by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.

In this context, I wish to recall that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreed, under the agreement of 16 October 1998, that 2,000 members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission would be deployed on part of its territory, Kosovo and Metohija. The validity of the agreement was confirmed by resolution 1203 (1998), of 24 October 1998, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fulfilled all its obligations under the resolution and the agreement. However, William Walker, who headed the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission and was, as an official of the organization, obliged to act objectively and impartially, abused his mandate and the OSCE mission in order to promote the goals that have been unveiled lately and consisted of the creation of an independent Kosovo and greater Albania.

The Verification Mission headed by William Walker never acted in its full capacity, and all its verifiers were withdrawn on the basis of his decision of 20 March 1999, immediately before the aggression on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The failure to realize the OSCE Mission under the agreement of 16 October 1998, the pressure put on Helena Ranta to tailor her forensic findings to William

Walker's wishes and the dispatch of a false report on the alleged massacre of civilians committed in the village of Račak speak volumes, especially in the context of the recent statements by William Walker regarding the project of creating a greater Albania. They indicate in clear terms that he acted in a way that was abusive of the OSCE mandate and, by the same token, violated resolution 1203 (1998).

In this context, the role played by William Walker can be characterized only as an abuse of his position in a respectable international organization such as the OSCE to create the political conditions for the adoption of a decision on the aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This is also corroborated by the recent statement of Victoria Nuland to the effect that the United States has invested in the independence of Kosovo for 20 years.

The actions of William Walker and the use of armed force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are nothing other than a flagrant violation of the principles on which the United Nations is based, in particular the principle on refraining from the threat of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State, and a violation of the imperative clause of Article 53 of the United Nations Charter to the effect that no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies, which includes the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, without the authorization of the Security Council.

The decision to use force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was taken and carried out without the authorization of the Security Council by those same countries that continue to this day to advocate recognition of the independence of Kosovo. The sovereign rights of Serbia are thus being violated, and the authority of the Council in the performance of its main duty of the maintenance of peace and security is being undermined.

The illegal decision on the aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resulted primarily from the report of William Walker, although there was neither a humanitarian disaster nor any persecution of Kosovo and Metohija Albanians in the province in 1998-1999. For instance, at the time when William Walker was heading the Verification Mission, a communication from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 12 January 1999 to a court in Trier stated that the operations of the Yugoslav and Serbian security

forces were not directed against Kosovo Albanians as an ethnic group but against the militant opponents and their alleged followers.

The position on the alleged humanitarian intervention in Kosovo and Metohija was not that of the Security Council or any other credible body. The facts underlying the assessment that a military intervention was required at the time were contradictory and tailored to suit the needs of NATO, with the goal of launching an armed aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Invoking a humanitarian intervention as the basis for the use of armed force is in sharp contrast with the practice of the International Court of Justice — for example, the case of Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua — and other documents developed under United Nations auspices. That the so-called humanitarian intervention has never become part of international law was made clear by, *inter alia*, the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), which confirmed in its paragraph 79 that

“the relevant provisions of the [United Nations] Charter are sufficient to address the full range of threats to international peace and security”,

and further reaffirmed

“the authority of the Security Council to mandate coercive action to maintain and restore international peace and security”,

emphasizing

“the importance of acting in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter”.

The aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resulted in large-scale destruction and loss of life and the expulsion of a huge number of Serbs and other non-Albanians from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. The facts provide ample evidence today that the action against Serbia was planned and that it was calculated and not aimed at satisfying international justice.

Resolution 1244 (1999) does not constitute, nor can it constitute, a *post factum* approval of the use of armed force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, nor can it change the legal qualification of the NATO intervention as an aggression. That resolution, as stated by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of

Kosovo (see A/64/881), forms part of international law, as does UNMIK regulation No. 2009/1, which defines Kosovo and Metohija as a territory within the Republic of Serbia under international administration.

It is evident that the human rights of non-Albanians continue to be systematically threatened all across Kosovo and Metohija. Numerous incidents provide ample evidence of the fact that security in Kosovo and Metohija remains unstable and subject to an escalation of violence. As a rule, returnees in ethnically mixed communities are the most vulnerable. This issue should be accorded greater attention in the reports of the Secretary-General. On average, 10 to 15 ethnically motivated attacks are recorded every month, followed by an ever-present intimidation campaign against Serbs. None of the perpetrators has yet been punished. Let me mention only the protest by a group of Albanians in the village of Ljubožda, near Istok, to which 13 Serbian families returned recently, as proof that Kosovo and Metohija still has a long way to go before it becomes a multi-ethnic society in which all its residents are treated equally. The lack of proper institutional response represents tacit approval of, and even support for, the continuation of such practices.

There can be no harmonious coexistence where the rate of IDP returns, only 1.9 per cent, is lower than in the most traumatized post-conflict areas. Let me remind the Council that there are still more than 200,000 IDPs living in central Serbia. The key obstacles to their return include continuous attacks on Serbian and other non-Albanian returnees, looting, the desecration of cultural and religious heritage, and politically motivated criminal proceedings against IDPs, as well as their inability to exercise the right to property restitution.

In this context, it is necessary that all actors involved in the resolution of the question of IDPs work together to create conditions conducive to unimpeded and long-term sustainable returns, a key element of the UNMIK mandate. In a memorandum issued following his mission to Kosovo and Metohija, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

“notes with concern the existence in Kosovo of many obstacles to the voluntary return of displaced persons.”

He goes on to say that “[a]lthough the Stabilization Association Agreement”, signed by the European Union and Pristina in October 2015,

"reaffirms refugees' and displaced persons' right to return and the protection of their human rights, [...] progress in this field has been very modest."

The Commissioner expresses his particular concern

"about the reported negative impact on voluntary returns of acts of hostility or flagrantly ethnically motivated violence"

and the lack of classification by the police of

"ethnically motivated crimes as such and [...] systematic monitoring of the situation in this field".

A special threat to the security of the southern Serbian province recently has been the trend of the continuation of the process of the return of foreign terrorist fighters from Middle East battlefields and the escalation of political and religious extremism.

Serbia is strongly opposed to the establishment of the so-called Kosovo Army, contrary to resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. Efforts to establish the so-called Kosovo Army are but an attempt to create new tensions at an extremely sensitive moment, marked by dangerous statements on redrawing internationally recognized borders and creating a greater Albania, an idea that we had believed belonged to the dark past of this part of the Western Balkans during the Second World War.

Guided by the interests of regional stability, Serbia is firmly committed to the continuation of the dialogue, aimed primarily at resolving the everyday problems of the people living in Kosovo and Metohija without prejudice to the future status of the province and with full respect for resolution 1244 (1999). This resolution continues to be the basis and framework for the solution to the question of Kosovo and Metohija with guarantees for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. We consider that the dialogue, with the facilitation of the European Union, is the most appropriate vehicle to build confidence between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, and an important mechanism for supporting the efforts of the European Union to solidify peace and stability and further the process of European integration in our region.

Yet it is hard to push aside the impression that the dialogue is not yielding results at the moment, which could be due to the non-constructive position of Pristina to implement the agreements. For the dialogue to be genuinely meaningful, it must not be abused as a

platform for the imposition of the interests of one side, based on unrealistic expectations that normalization should amount to nothing other than the recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence by Serbia. The positive results achieved thus far in areas such as telecommunications and the freedom of movement are eloquent proof that there is no alternative to the dialogue and that it should be continued with more responsibility and a genuine commitment to compromise.

We hope that Pristina will realize that it should and must find mutually acceptable solutions with Belgrade for all outstanding issues, which cannot be based on *diktat* and fait accompli. In the quest for such solutions, it is necessary to avoid unilateral acts — which are, in many ways, harmful — such as attempts to admit Pristina to various international organizations and the unlawful decisions, which are null and void for the Republic of Serbia, such as that of 1 March to appropriate the property of the Republic of Serbia. Such decisions needlessly pollute the atmosphere of the dialogue. To give the dialogue a chance, it will certainly be necessary that the facilitator demonstrate stronger leadership, primarily in the area of the implementation of reached agreements.

I will conclude my statement with a call to those countries that have not recognized the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo to remain consistent in their principled respect of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, I call on those countries that have recognized Kosovo to reconsider their decision and contribute accordingly to efforts to finding a mutually acceptable solution to this question, proceeding from the unacceptability of unilateralism as a way of solving any issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: I am honoured to be here today, and I sincerely appreciate the opportunity given to me by the members of the Security Council, whose time is very valuable. I know that, as we speak, the world has many pressing challenges and problems to address.

It was in 1993 that members of the Council in this Chamber spoke about Kosovo for the first time. At that time, when based solely on our ethnicity we were exposed to apartheid, imprisoned for our political beliefs and expelled from our schools and rightful jobs, the Security Council members in this chamber

spoke up. Later in 1998 and 1999, as we were living the nightmare of brutality, the Security Council adopted seven resolutions calling for peace and the end of ethnic cleansing. For that we will be forever grateful. All members spoke on our behalf. They were with us when approximately 1 million Kosovars — half of our population — were deported, while assisting us in the refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia. And they were with us when we returned home. Although we found everything in ashes, we rebuilt our homes and lives with their help and support. They were there for us during the most difficult days, but now it is simply unnecessary, counterproductive and, frankly, cynical to come here every three months, repeat the same old stories just for purely political reasons and a power play.

Resolution 1244 (1999), adopted 18 years ago, expired a long time ago. First of all, it refers to a union that no longer exists. I am sure that the members of the Council have heard about Montenegro's recent accession to NATO. According to the resolution, however, Montenegro is part of a union called Serbia and Montenegro. Secondly, it was precisely in this Chamber that on 24 October 2005 the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2005/51) calling for the beginning of a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.

It was precisely the Secretary General's Special Envoy, the wise President Ahtisaari, who, after a very intensive and extensive process of negotiations, proposed independence for Kosovo as a final solution. It was precisely the International Court of Justice that, at Serbia's request for review, specifically and unambiguously stated that Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence and that its independence did not violate the international law. I invite everyone to come to Kosovo and see the reality, because — trust me — the discussions in this Chamber do not correspond to it.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: just because Serbia does not recognize us as a State does not mean that we are not within our rights to be an independent State and people. Just because we are not yet a State Member of the United Nations — because of purely geopolitical power plays beyond our control — does not make us any less of a State. And, yes, we are not a perfect State. We face many challenges. We have much that remains to be done. But we all know that the reason that we came and sat here today — and

why we do so every three months — is not because we are not perfect.

Let us take the example of minority rights. If the situation of minorities in any given country were to be the criterion for meeting here every three months, believe me when I say that Kosovo would be far down on the list, not because the situation concerning the integration of minorities is perfect but because we have gone to great lengths to accommodate their needs. Serbs in Kosovo are the most privileged minority in Europe. Does anyone know where the most discriminated community in Europe lives? The answer is in Serbia — Presheve, Medvege and Bujanoc, where every day the Albanian community is faced by all forms of harsh discrimination. I am not talking only about high levels of intolerance or hidden discrimination, which has always existed, but the visible and constant discrimination of ethnic Albanians, especially in the areas of the economy and education, including their underrepresentation at the local and central levels of employment in the public sector and many other restrictions that they face on a daily basis.

I know that because I visited them myself. Yet there is no Security Council meeting or discussion concerning their rights. The bottom line is that Serbia uses this platform and somehow insists on an asymmetrical representation. It insists that we are somehow not equal, that somehow they are superior. Let me to say it again, loud and clear. We are independent, equal and confident, and we are not inferior. There is something inherently racist in that attitude. Serbia has always tried to portray us as an unworthy class of people with no culture, a second class. Try saying that to Majlinda Kelmendi, our Olympic gold medallist; or Petrit Halilaj, who was honoured last week at the Venice Biennale; or Mergim Cahani, who three years ago had an idea and today is running the fastest-growing information and technology company in the region; or the brand-new graduates I met the other day at the American University in Pristina, who were full of hopes, dreams and curiosity, no different from their peers in Europe and America.

What I am trying to say is that although Kosovo has many challenges, this Chamber is not where we should address them. Furthermore, spending the Security Council's precious resources on a Mission that no longer serves a purpose is an injustice to all the people who do need its help. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has no

role in Kosovo, which is why we were surprised to see that its budget and staff for next year are increasing. The Council may choose to keep an expensive Mission in Kosovo, but there is no role for it to play in its current form.

The most recent Security Council debate on peacekeeping missions (see S/PV.7918), initiated by the United States delegation in the presence of the Secretary-General and supported by the members of the Council, highlighted conclusions that the Council's approach to peacekeeping missions should change, which is precisely what we have been calling for a long time now. Without undermining the vital importance that peacekeeping missions have for security in general, I should point out that the mandates of some missions — UNMIK being a good example — were drafted years, sometimes even decades, ago. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassadors Haley and Delattre for saying that this was the right time to close the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

The second thing I want to talk about is the dialogue with Serbia. While we will remain committed to it, we are tired of double standards, double games and ambiguity. On the one hand Serbia tells us that it is for peace and reconciliation; on the other, every day it misuses the INTERPOL Red Notice system and issues warrants against our leaders and freedom fighters who defended their homes from atrocities, as the Council and the entire world are well aware. That seems to be part of the old pattern of brutality mixed with fake bureaucracy that tormented Kosovars for decades. After beating, humiliating, killing or, in the best cases, expelling them from Kosovo, Serbian police would draw up terrorism charges against them to prevent them from returning home or having a normal life.

By the way, those subject to these kinds of fake bureaucratic tactics and fake allegations were not just Kosovars. Many were leaders from other countries, including a former United States President, a Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Prime Ministers of Italy and Germany, as well as Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Defence were included on Red Notices. The most recent episode, involving Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, has thankfully ended, and although it took a few months, he has finally been released by the French authorities. What happened to him says a lot about the state of mind that prevails in

Serbia today. Mr. Haradinaj was acquitted not once but twice by the Tribunal in The Hague.

Serbia knows very well that it has lost the battle with Kosovo. Militarily, it was lost in 1999; politically in 2008; juridically in 2009, with the ruling of the International Court of Justice. And it is now clear that Serbia wants to win the moral challenge by trying somehow to artificially create a moral parity between itself and the rest of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. That is simply false. There was one aggressor in the former Yugoslavia, and it was Serbia. There was one military that fought for expansion and committed genocide. The rest of us — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo — were fighting for freedom and our lives. Even today, Serbia refuses to accept historical responsibility for what happened. Even today we heard a representative of Serbia's Government deny a massacre that happened before the eyes of the world. The point I am trying to make is that for reconciliation to happen, Serbia has to accept Kosovo as an equal and as a State. And it also has to accept its historical responsibility. Would the reconciliation between France and Germany have ever happened if Germany had denied its responsibility for the Second World War?

Serbia has failed to deal with its own past. It has failed to deal with the real — not fictional, but real and well-documented — crimes that were committed in Kosovo during the war. The Centre for Human Rights in Serbia published a horrifying report with facts and figures that illustrate the unprecedented measures that Serbia undertook to hide traces of its war crimes, going as far as to erect buildings on top of mass graves. Imagine the feelings of the thousand families in Kosovo that are demanding answers and a proper burial. Instead of finding the strength to deal with its own past, instead of seeking catharsis, Serbia has chosen the path of denial. The number of Serbians charged with or convicted for crimes committed in Kosovo is zero. Rather, they are being promoted to high-level positions, as in the case of General Diković, whose responsibility for killing 1,400 civilians is documented.

Regardless, however, we will not allow Serbia to deter us from our own commitments. Between 2009 and 2015 alone, Kosovo institutions issued more than 20 indictments for war crimes. Every life is important and every death should be properly investigated. We will remain committed to peace and dialogue, just as we have always been. And we will work harder and

harder to become a responsible member of the family of the free nations of the world.

We also want to become contributors to regional and global security. In accordance with our laws and Constitution, therefore, we have initiated the establishment of a Kosovo army. We will engage in an intensive and serious effort to convince the local Serbian population to support this project. All other minorities in Kosovo support it. But we will not allow anyone to hold us hostage, nor will we give veto power to anyone in that regard. We will push for constitutional changes, but if it becomes obvious that Serbia is interfering and not allowing local Serbian members of Parliament to decide on their own, then we will move ahead with legislative changes.

We are not buying MIGs, so there is no room for panic. This is a small defensive force, which will complete our State security infrastructure, in accordance with the security sector review that we conducted together with NATO.

As Council members may have already heard, after the no-confidence motion last week, Kosovo will hold early parliamentary elections in June this year. We have invited international observers to monitor the process. For Kosovo, the credibility of the electoral process is far more important than the outcome. Way too many challenges lie ahead this year, and the new Government will need full credibility and legitimacy to push forward the agenda.

Furthermore, while there are obvious differences between the political parties in Kosovo, just like in any democracy, there is a fundamental agreement and a broad social consensus about the Euro-Atlantic future of Kosovo. There is no Great Kosovo or Great Albania; there are Albanians living in Kosovo, Albanians living in Albania, Albanians living in Macedonia — our common goal and shared objective is to be equal citizens of the European Union.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I extend my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on the report (S/2017/387) of the

Secretary-General. Egypt reiterates its full support to Mr. Tanin in the performance of his duties. We also welcome Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku and thank them for their statements.

Egypt stresses its concern with regard to promoting security and stability in the Western Balkans region, which is affected by the situation in Kosovo. We highly value the efforts deployed by the Kosovo authorities recently with a view to achieving that objective and the reforms it has begun to implement. We commend the progress achieved in the economic, security and rule-of-law fields, which were reflected in higher development rates, lower unemployment and a general improvement in the investment environment. We call upon the new Kosovo Government to continue that approach of settling differences through constructive dialogue.

At the same time, we are concerned by the information contained in the report of the obstacles facing the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and the implementation of the agreements achieved between them. Egypt stresses that high-level dialogue between the two sides under the auspices of the European Union remains the most appropriate framework to settle differences peacefully between them. We call upon the two sides to exercise restraint and to refrain from unilateral steps that may exacerbate the situation between them. We therefore urge leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to continue the high-level dialogue with a view to achieving agreed and sustainable solutions that are acceptable by both sides and lay the foundations for peace and stability in the region.

We also express our concern at the surge of ethnic and nationalist tendencies, and also stress the need to avoid instigations that may exacerbate the situation and internal divisions. We welcome the decision by the political powers representing the Kosovo Serbs to end their boycott and resume their participation in the Government and the Assembly. We call upon all parties in Kosovo to also adopt the approach of dialogue, understanding and the establishment of State institutions, and stress the importance of achieving progress in the establishment of local Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which we believe is vital to ensure the institutional protection of the Kosovo Serbs.

Lastly, and in view of the importance we attach to regional peace and security as one of the pillars of our foreign policy, we stress the importance that the

Kosovo Assembly should accept the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro in order to expedite the integration of Kosovo in Europe.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Tanin for today's update on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations over 18 years to help Kosovo build multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. We are pleased that those efforts have largely been accomplished. The situation in Kosovo today is very different from when UNMIK was first created, and also different from 2008, when the Secretariat last restructured it. Given how Kosovo has progressed and has developed over the years, the United States and a growing number of Council members have urged the Secretariat to continue the work of winding down the mission, recognizing that it has fulfilled its mandate.

While UNMIK should go down in history as a model of the value of the United Nations, it increasingly risks being memorialized as an example of a programme lingering beyond its relevance and a bureaucracy not sure of how to deal with closure. Seemingly, without regard to the realities on the ground, UNMIK continues to be overresourced and overstaffed in comparison with its limited responsibilities. Even more puzzling, the Mission is requesting new funding for programming that is largely redundant: \$2 million dollars in additional resources, primarily for human rights and rule-of-law programming, despite the leading role of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in that area, and despite a demonstrated ability of the Government of Kosovo to effectively govern and administer those and other functions with complete independence.

In response to those realities, the United States supports considering the phasing out of UNMIK to better reflect the significant progress and development made in Kosovo. Any proposed alternative would need to reflect the reality on the ground and reduce the footprint of the United Nations in Kosovo. The United States repeats its call for the Council to adjust the reporting and briefing period for UNMIK from three to six months, or even longer, which would reduce the burden on the Secretariat and the Council, both of which face competing priorities of far greater urgency.

The United States greatly appreciates and supports the vital role the European Union (EU) as facilitator

of the Brussels dialogue, in particular EU High Representative Mogherini's personal leadership of the process. We call on leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to continue taking the needed steps to revitalize the talks and to exercise restraint as provocations arise. We also call on both Serbia and Kosovo to fully implement dialogue agreements without further delay and to work more actively towards the normalization of relations.

In relation to the comments about the events at Račak by the Minister of Justice of Serbia this morning, I would just say that the bodies at Račak are testimony to the atrocities and violence that took place there. The forensic work produced by international observers at the time was clear and unambiguous on that. All the countries in the Balkans must undertake a full, honest accounting of the events that transpired during the break up of Yugoslavia and the conflicts of the 1990s and refrain from that type of historical revisionism that sows distrust and fear. Rather than attempting to relitigate the past with falsehoods, leaders need to focus on the hard work necessary to promote dialogue and reconciliation and pursuing more stable, prosperous and secure Balkan region on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration. We call on all leaders in the region to avoid careless inflammatory rhetoric that incites backlash and instead, focus on addressing the fundamental political and economic reforms necessary to advance their further integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. The borders of the Balkan countries are defined and firm.

The United States reaffirms its support for Kosovo's efforts to develop into a prosperous and peaceful multi-ethnic democracy. We continue to strongly support the full international recognition of Kosovo and Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations. We encourage States Members of the United Nations that have not yet done so to join the more than 110 United Nations Members that have already recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), on his excellent briefing and to assure him once again of the full support of the Senegalese delegation as he carries out his duties.

Secondly, I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia,

and to Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States.

My delegation remains concerned about the continuing tensions that somewhat hamper the substantial progress noted since the end of the conflict. In that regard, and with a view to restarting the process of building and preserving lasting stability that extends beyond Kosovo to all entire region of the Balkans, first, we strongly encourage Kosovar political actors to work towards maintaining a peaceful political climate on which the quality of the dialogue with Belgrade greatly depends; and secondly, we encourage Serbian authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to participating in a constructive and peaceful dialogue with Priština.

That said, Senegal welcomes the progress made thus far by both parties in the dialogue conducted under the auspices of the European Union and encourages countries and partners with influence to continue to use that influence to revive and support the talks. In order to build on the results achieved in that context, we believe that it is essential that the agreements reached thus far be implemented and that political leaders on both sides be fully committed to pursuing, in a constructive spirit, the dialogue as it is the only viable way to normalize relations.

Recent developments outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2017/387), including the proposal by the President of Kosovo to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force, through legislation and not via referendum, have sparked controversy. Fortunately, that draft law was withdrawn on 7 March, with a statement from President Thaçi promising that no unilateral action would be taken on that issue and that the transformation process would be transparent and inclusive and carried out in cooperation with the country's international partners.

On another note, the adoption by the Assembly of Kosovo of the resolution calling for the suspension of dialogue between Belgrade and Priština, which is facilitated by the European Union, in protest at the detention of Mr. Ramush Haradinaj, became another source of tension, which we hope has abated now that he has been released. Senegal also hopes that fears arising from the decision of the Government of Kosovo to transfer to Kosovo the ownership of all property

previously registered to predecessors or administrative, military, social or political organizations, have subsided.

On a positive note, my delegation commends the unhindered participation of Kosovo Serbs in Serbia's presidential election at polling stations throughout Kosovo, as well as the smooth running of the elections, which received support from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force. We also welcome the high-level meetings organized by Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on 24 January and 6 February in Brussels. The Presidents and Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo participated in the meetings. They have all committed to resuming dialogue at the highest level, under the auspices of the European Union, and to refraining from making provocative or belligerent statements.

We share the view of the Secretary-General that the issue of missing persons, which should remain a top priority, requires that leaders on both sides have a firm and genuine political will in order to provide families with the answers they have been awaiting for so long.

On another note, my delegation would like to commend the efforts of the Kosovo Security Force in the fight against violent extremism in Kosovo. In addition, the activities carried out under the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, whose mandate was extended until 14 June 2018, appear to be advantageous in that they help to build on the achievements made in the areas of defence and the promotion of the rule of law, human rights and the fight against terrorism and organized crime. In addition, we welcome the activities of UNMIK in promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and in providing support for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština.

Senegal would like to express its appreciation regarding the important milestones reached in the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština and encourages the strengthening of the dynamics to normalize relations between the two parties, as well as enhanced cooperation, which is in the interest of their people and fosters peace in the subregion.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking our friend Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing today and for the work he is doing with the Mission. I would also like

to thank Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements to the Council today.

Sweden has long stood with the people of Kosovo in their efforts to leave behind the legacy of war and to build a peaceful and prosperous society. Sweden's Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström, visited Kosovo only two weeks ago to reiterate our firm support of Kosovo's European perspective. She also stressed the need for continuing reforms and normalization of Pristina's relationship with Belgrade as part of the process. We stand ready to help and will continue to support Kosovo's reform efforts through our bilateral development cooperation.

Delivering on Kosovo's European perspective and that of the wider western Balkans region remains a top priority of the European Union. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are prerequisites for a stable, peaceful and prosperous western Balkans. We are therefore concerned about the hardened rhetoric in the region in recent months, as exemplified by the Special Representative today. We call on both sides to redouble their efforts for peace by refraining from rhetoric or actions that risk undermining trust and instead working actively to build confidence and mutual understanding across the region.

It is clear that the future of both Serbia and Kosovo lies within the European Union. For that reason too, normalization of relations is essential. The European Union-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue provides an important framework for finding pragmatic and mutually acceptable solutions to the concerns of both sides. It is an irreversible process that requires a firm commitment.

We expect Pristina and Belgrade to engage constructively in the dialogue and to implement their respective parts of the agreement. That includes, most notably, the dismantling of parallel structures in Serb-majority areas and the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. In addition, it is essential that the status issue not hinder Kosovo's European perspective or membership in international organizations.

To achieve the aspirations of the Kosovar people, national leaders must find ways to work together so as not to undermine efforts to achieve the crucial reforms needed to benefit all of the people living in Kosovo. It is regrettable that the current political impasse has hindered concrete and meaningful reform

efforts. We hope that the forthcoming elections will lead to strengthening the democratic institutions and continued reforms, especially on rule of law and socioeconomic development.

The United Nations and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have made invaluable contributions to achieving the level of peace and security that we see in Kosovo today. Kosovo will continue to need the support of the international community. However, the present challenges faced by the country must be dealt with, primarily within the framework of the European Union integration process, including through the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. In light of that, we would be interested to receive the views of the Special Representative and the Secretary-General on the possibility of further downsizing UNMIK's structure, size and tasks, as well as on adjusting the reporting and briefing period from three to six months.

The frameworks are in place to realize the vision of a stable and prosperous Kosovo with a normalized relationship with Serbia. However, to fully realize that vision, a more consistent and sustained effort by both Pristina and Belgrade is needed. Doing so will have positive effects across the Western Balkans region.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister of Justice of Serbia, Ms. Nela Kuburović, and share the serious concerns she has expressed with regard to the state of affairs in Kosovo. We are also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and his team for their work, and we thank Mr. Tanin for his objective briefing on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It shows that there ongoing serious, profound problems in the province that require immediate solution, as well as outside monitoring.

Indeed, the scope of ongoing challenges in the province is not decreasing but assuming new forms. As a result, the goal of creating a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo is further away than ever. The problem lies in the obvious lack of desire on the part of the Kosovo authorities to fulfil the obligations undertaken within the framework of the dialogue with Belgrade. This is taking place against the background of the blatant condoning of the situation by outside actors.

The Brussels mediation process is biased in allowing the Kosovo-Albanians to behave in such a manner. As a result, the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina is deteriorating and trust is losing ground. The dialogue has faced an impasse for many months. There has been no major breakthrough on the main track of the negotiations — the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities — despite the fact that an agreement was drafted more than four years ago.

We consider it unacceptable and destructive to attempt to impose a self-governing system on the Serbs that would reduce their own powers to an absolute minimum. It is obvious that the genuine goal of such dead-end initiatives is to blame the Serbs for the dialogue's impasse, whereas in fact the situation is exactly the reverse. The lack of pressure from Brussels means that Kosovo's political leaders feel that they can do anything. They no longer refrain from using the language of open provocation. Very recently, Mr. Thaçi threatened to resign from the post of the so-called President if his initiative to transform the Kosovo Security Force into a fully-fledged army is not implemented. At the same time, we are convinced that the implementation of his proposal would have been a very serious violation of international law, particularly resolution 1244 (1999) and inevitably led to further destabilization in the region and even greater conflict potential.

Of course exerting relevant pressure on Pristina must continue. At the same time, the Kosovo Assembly has adopted a resolution to suspend the dialogue until such a time when France releases someone who is suspected of very serious crimes, namely, the Kosovo Liberation Army fighter Ramush Haradinaj. Moreover, his brother, who is a representative in the Assembly, has threatened ethnic cleansing and issued ultimatums. On 27 April, a French court made an illegitimate and politicized decision to release Mr. Haradinaj, who was apprehended in January by INTERPOL at the request of Serbia. That demonstrates the double standards used in the case of the parties to the Yugoslavian conflict. Once again, we underscore that those who are guilty of carrying out war crimes, regardless of their actual status or position, must be punished.

We are also not surprised by the fact that the investigation of the crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army has been postponed. Allow me to recall that Mr. Marty briefed the Council of

Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the crimes he had investigated, including the trafficking of human organs, more than six years ago. We hope in the very near future to see the initial results of the Specialist Chambers in The Hague and that that body will lack the flaws of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It is important to ensure that such actions be as transparent as possible.

The European Union, through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which plays a key role in organizing the workings of the Specialist Chambers, must ensure an unbiased and professional approach, which the ICTY was lacking at the time. Mr. Haradinaj was acquitted twice. Moreover, dozens of witnesses in his case were threatened and attacked. This problem becomes all the more evident against the background of the ongoing deterioration we have observed in the region due to provocations made in the name of greater Albania, which is a threat to the security and territorial integrity of a number of States.

Let us try to understand the regional scope of this issue. In Kosovo, Mr. Thaçi stated in an ultimatum that all Albanians will live in the same State unless the European Union fulfils his expectations for integration. A similar sentiment has been expressed by the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Rama. In Macedonia, Albanians are gathering around the infamous Tirana platform, and similar signals are being conveyed by Albanian leaders living in the south of Serbia.

Against this background, let me be candid. We are aware that the former head of the Kosovo Verification Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Walker, distinguished himself by speaking in favour of the project of bringing together the Albanians in Albania, Kosovo and the diaspora and calling upon Albanians to take the final step towards this goal. We call on the European Union and Western capitals to undertake measures as soon as possible to stop these provocative statements, which must be replaced by expressions of a desire to live as good neighbours with mutual respect.

Another example of the weakness of the provincial governmental institutions include the political crisis in Kosovo, whose outcome we can easily predict. Moreover, the freedom of movement agreed by Belgrade and Pristina was undermined by the actions of Kosovo law-enforcement bodies in preventing supporters of Mr. Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party from attending

an electoral rally in the municipality of Leposavić, thereby violating principles that seemed inviolable in Europe, such as the freedom of speech, movement, peaceful assembly and participation in elections. Similarly, there was an incident on 9 May when the head of the Serbian Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Djurić, was barred without explanation from going to a Victory Day meeting in Gračanica.

Pristina's acts aimed at appropriating Serbian State property are unacceptable. Equally unacceptable is the Kosovo Government's decision to transfer all community-owned enterprises to State ownership.

We continue to witness ongoing physical attacks on Serbs. We see their property burned down. We see refugees and internally displaced people thwarted in their attempts to return home, not to mention the desecration of property belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, in particular the land of the Visoki Dečani Orthodox Monastery, despite the fact that its rights had been upheld by the Constitutional Court in Kosovo. The cathedral church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina is in a deplorable state. The Serbian Orthodox Church has been unable to gain access to its religious objects there, which is necessary for their restoration after attacks by vandals.

The need to combat the spread of radicalism and terrorism in Kosovo is increasingly pressing. We are concerned by the fact that the province is being used to recruit foreign terrorist fighters who fight alongside extremists in the Middle East and to prepare terrorist acts elsewhere in the world. Under these circumstances, we think it untimely and counterproductive to plan to reduce the UNMIK staff and the budget parameters. The situation in the province means that decisions such as these are inappropriate, especially in the absence of real dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Therefore, we need to set aside any request to downsize the Mission or even to close it all together.

Instead, we need to undertake constructive work and interaction with that important United Nations operation. I would like to remind the Council that UNMIK is working despite having minimal resources at its disposal. Even so, it is playing a key role in Kosovo affairs and remains an irreplaceable international monitoring tool designed to help normalize the situation in Kosovo, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), which remains fully valid.

In the light of the foregoing, we see no reason to review the practice of having quarterly Security Council briefings on the situation in Kosovo, which, as we have seen during the discussions today, continues to require very close international attention and monitoring.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Tanin, for his briefing. China welcomes the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of Serbia, and thanks her for her statement. I have also listened attentively to the statement of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, understands the country's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo and appreciates its positive efforts to achieve a political settlement of the question of Kosovo. At present, the security situation on the ground remains relatively stable, although some underlying complex issues remain unresolved. China welcomes the holding of another high-level meeting between Belgrade and Pristina. We hope that the parties will remain committed to the general direction of a political settlement, work in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust, and implement all agreements already reached as soon as possible.

Resolution 1244 (1999) provides the important legal basis for resolving the question of Kosovo. All sides should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, work under the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions and find a solution acceptable to all through dialogue and negotiation.

National reconciliation is in the common interest of all sides. We hope that parties will always put the welfare of people first, take concrete measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities in Kosovo, and safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans. The Security Council should keep its attention focused on the question of Kosovo, remain committed to promoting its proper settlement and send a clear signal to the public.

China appreciates the work carried out by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin. We support UNMIK as it continues to discharge its duties in accordance with its mandate and cooperate constructively with all sides.

We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration, make steady headway in improving the situation on the ground and play a positive role for the early settlement of the question of Kosovo.

Mr. Cardì (Italy): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin for his briefing and Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their detailed statements.

For Italy, the prospect of European integration is a crucial driving force in efforts aimed at reform that the States of the western Balkans are expected to carry out with the goal of making stability in the region a lasting achievement together with the institutional consolidation in and economic and social development of the area. A few days ago, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini, spoke very clearly about the European Union commitment to those objectives (see S/PV.7935).

We firmly believe that the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, which is crucial to the stability of the entire region, can be accomplished only through tangible progress in the process of dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). Important and concrete results have been achieved, and we appreciate the commitment reiterated by the parties to the process. At the same time, we share the Secretary-General's hope of seeing more consistent and sustained efforts from both parties to reactivate the talks and deliver more substantial results.

In that respect, with the perspective of the anticipated elections coming up in Kosovo, we call on Pristina to focus on the swift implementation of all measures agreed in the framework of the European Union facilitated dialogue, with special regard to the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities. Also, it is important for Pristina to continue along the path of reform, from strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption to socioeconomic development. We hope those reforms will be swiftly pursued by the new elected Government, with the constructive cooperation of all parties.

Underscoring the priority of the European track and acknowledging the substantial progress achieved by Kosovo in recent years, we encourage the Security Council to consider a review of the United Nations presence in Kosovo, including a reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission

in Kosovo (UNMIK) that is consistent with overall peacekeeping reform. That, in our view, will obviously have to be done in close coordination with other international organizations in the region, notably, the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

We would like to once again request that the Secretary-General make recommendations in that regard, given that UNMIK is already refocusing its efforts on confidence-building and collaboration among communities, and to draw his attention, and that of the Council, to the opportunity to improve UNMIK's synergy with the European Union and its coordination with other international actors. We equally support the proposal to revise the frequency of the Secretary-General's briefings and reports submitted to the Security Council in order to better reflect the current situation on the ground.

I conclude by highlighting the relevance of the regional dimension. As Chair of the Berlin process in 2017, Italy will work with all western Balkan countries to identify priorities to boost regional integration, stability and economic growth. Both Belgrade and Pristina are actively participating in that process. On 24 May, the six Ministers of the western Balkan countries will visit Rome to meet with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in preparation for the summit we will host in Trieste on 12 July. The summit will provide added value to the regional cooperation process and to the European integration path of the western Balkans.

Italy will continue to be proactively engaged in the western Balkans — in Kosovo, with our long-standing contribution to the activities of the United Nations, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, as well as at the bilateral level. The future of the region matters to all of Europe, particularly Italy. For that reason, we strongly condemn the nationalist and divisive rhetoric recently reignited throughout the region. In order to avoid political instability inside countries of the region, and to counter any further deterioration of the relations among the western Balkans, we call on all parties to refrain from any unilateral initiative or declaration that could hinder common efforts to improve cooperation and consolidate stability. We believe that it is time for all western Balkan countries to turn the page and work together in the interest of all of their people.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative Tanin for his substantive and comprehensive briefing. We thank all of the briefers for their updates on recent developments.

My delegation would like to offer some observations. The developments of the past months highlight the need for the increased engagement of both sides so as to facilitate constructive dialogue, as set forth in the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. The parties need to focus on confidence-building measures and political, military, economic, environmental and human dimensions, in compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and under the auspices of the United Nations, with the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other relevant regional organizations in order to maintain comprehensive and durable security and stability in Kosovo.

At the same time, no initiative should cause further tensions and instability. The situation in Kosovo still needs the continued attention of the Council as a matter on its current agenda. There are yet a number of difficult issues, such as the lack of intercommunal trust and cooperation, increased hatred, missing persons and the right of each — the Serbs in Kosovo and the Albanians in Serbia — to use its native language. The full implementation of language laws, with the protection of minority communities, is critical to ensuring equal rights for all and preserving the cultural diversity of Kosovo and Serbia.

Both sides should take measures to implement language laws and show full respect for each other's cultural heritage. The protection of religious and cultural heritage should be a priority policy, so as to build trust and confidence among communities in Kosovo and Serbia. We commend the additional measures and initiatives of civil society to foster dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. All interested parties must boost and encourage steps that promote the liberation of the people of Serbia and Kosovo, and convince the local population in Kosovo to accept their outcome.

It is critical to communicate extensively and accurately, with both parties and communities, the kinds of social and economic benefits gained by the local population in Kosovo. Residents need to know that dialogue is the only means to bring about good governance and the rule of law, and to tackle the issues of unemployment, education, health care, pensions and

other entitlements. All of those activities will assist in gaining the much-needed support.

On the topic of human rights, we need to focus on implementing resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and subsequent resolutions for enhancing gender equality and empowerment. Furthermore, social stability is achievable only with the full engagement of the United Nations country team, regional and subregional organizations and civil society groups working to achieve sustaining peace and, thus, further peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation in Kosovo. Progress and the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia remains of crucial importance for regional and international security. We call on both sides to exert great political will to overcome differences through genuine political dialogue, so as to ensure peace and security in the region.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): Please allow me to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his informative briefing and continued service. I should also like to thank Minister Kuburović and Ambassador Çitaku for their extensive remarks.

It has been nearly 18 years since resolution 1244 (1999) established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which played an essential role in restoring peace and stability to Kosovo and the region. Kosovo subsequently achieved independence in 2008. The European Union (EU) has supported the rule of law in many ways, including through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. The picture in Kosovo today is vastly different from that of 1999, and the centrality of UNMIK's role has undeniably diminished.

Japan fully supports peace, stability, democracy and the economic development of Kosovo. Also, we need to be clear about our priorities in the Security Council, in order to make its work more efficient and effective.

The Council today is faced with serious conflicts and crises in the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world. The Council's workload is greater than it has ever been. By contrast, while the risk of violence in Kosovo has not completely diminished, it is far less than in these other regions. The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/387) notes that there were no violent incidents in Kosovo surrounding the recent Serbian presidential election or any major incidents in northern Kosovo over the past three months. We

therefore believe that we are long overdue to modify the briefing cycle that has remained in place since 1999. We believe that a half-year cycle or longer should be more than sufficient.

With this in mind, Japan believes that limited peacekeeping resources must be redirected to address the most acute needs and crises. The time is ripe for the Council to undertake a review of UNMIK in order to assess the functions that UNMIK alone can provide, as well as possible personnel reductions.

None of this is to deny the outstanding issues that Kosovo faces; reconciliation between the Albanian and Serb communities is by far the most important. The Secretary-General's report notes that many Kosovar Serbs remain unable to return. It will be important for the EU-facilitated high-level dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade to continue. For Kosovo to become a truly multicultural society, ongoing efforts are needed to expand reconciliation and tolerance, including via the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities.

Japan also hopes that Kosovo will become an increasingly responsible member of the international community. We thus welcome the entry into force last year of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the EU. At the same time, we noted the adoption of the no-confidence motion against the Cabinet on 10 May and urge leaders to ensure that Kosovo continues its steady progress towards EU membership while avoiding any narrow nationalist appeals.

Finally, I should like to take note of Kosovo's peace and stability, its democratic progress and last year's 4 per cent economic growth. It is my strong belief that Kosovo will become a diverse, multicultural country through community reconciliation, just socioeconomic policies and tireless efforts by each citizen. While the presence of the United Nations in Kosovo should be scaled down in future, our unwavering support for this young nation's continued development and democracy will remain unchanged.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), our colleague Ambassador Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo, which has highlighted how the use of language could cause

real problems and how loose talk, some would say rhetoric, could lead to a dangerous situation.

I also welcome the presence of Minister Nela Kuburović at today's meeting and would like to thank her for her statement. I also thank Ambassador Ms. Vlora Çitaku for her remarks.

At the previous debate (see S/PV.7891), we made our position very clear with respect to the need to ensure that all the issues surrounding Kosovo are resolved in a just and fair manner, without ignoring the interests of any, big or small. We would like to reiterate our support for the peaceful and amicable resolution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement.

We also welcome the ongoing efforts being made by the European Union in facilitating dialogue between the two parties, including the convening of the two high-level meetings by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in the reporting period.

We note the latest political and security developments in relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and we are concerned by the slow progress in the practical implementation of dialogue agreements between the two parties during the reporting period. In this regard, the lack of concrete steps towards the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo as well the delay in completing judicial integration in northern Kosovo, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/387), should be seen as a source of concern.

We also note the controversy in relation to the proposal on the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force and the strong reaction that it has created. On the other hand, however, we recognize some of the positive developments as highlighted in the report, including the resumption by members of the Kosovo Serb political grouping of their participation in official activities of the Assembly and Government of Kosovo, the conduct of voting for the Serbian presidential election throughout Kosovo without any incident, and the lessening of tension in northern Kosovo.

Ethiopia also fully supports the work that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been undertaking in the discharge of the mandates bestowed on it within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), particularly its good offices to

defuse tensions and promote consensual solutions to problems on the ground. It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue and human rights, strengthen community reconciliation, and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region.

In concluding, I should like to state that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be ensured when there is the necessary resolve on the part of all parties to address the real challenge they face. In this respect, we encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation in a spirit of understanding and compromise on mutually acceptable ways.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. Let me join others in welcoming Ambassador Çitaku and Minister Kuburović to the Council.

It has been less than three months since the Council met to discuss the situation in Kosovo. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/387) makes clear, it has been a comparatively quiet period, one that does not warrant the Council's attention so soon after our last meeting.

This period of calm is welcome. A de-escalation in tension between Kosovo and Serbia, whether in this Chamber or in the region, is something that I am sure we would all like to see sustained. We particularly welcome the withdrawal of the proposal to transform the Kosovo Security Force into an army. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to continue to engage with communities in Kosovo and NATO partners on any such moves.

Despite the stability of the reporting period, we are concerned by the slow progress in the European Union-facilitated dialogue. We all know that the future of Kosovo will be determined in Brussels and not in this Chamber in New York. So it is vital that both sides re-engage and live up to their commitment to the dialogue following elections in Serbia and the forthcoming elections in Kosovo in June.

As Kosovo prepares to go to the polls, let me say that we look forward to free and fair elections and to a Government that reflects the will of the people. Once it is formed, there will be plenty to do, including continuing efforts on issues such as the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. In that effort, they will have the fullest support of the United Kingdom.

While it was not captured in the report of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), it is important to recognize in this Chamber the progress that Kosovo has made internationally since we last met. Diplomatic relations have been established with Brunei and Samoa, and Kosovo opened its first embassy in Africa, in Senegal. And in a further sign of ever-increasing international integration, Kosovo became the 181st member of the World Customs Organization, a move that will bring economic benefits for all who call Kosovo home.

This is progress that we rarely hear about in the Council. Instead, every three months, we are transported back nearly 20 years to a time of ethnic division and of fluid lines on maps, but, in truth, those lines have long since been set. These meetings do not reflect Kosovo now but as it was. Let me reiterate, therefore, that it is long past time for the Council to decrease the frequency of these meetings. And just as these meetings must adapt, so too must UNMIK, so that it better reflects the present situation.

We recognize the important work that UNMIK has done during many years for the benefit of Kosovo, and welcome its activism on the women and peace and security agenda during the reporting period. But it is time for the Mission to take a step back. As such, we are disappointed by the move to increase the budget of UNMIK this year, particularly after numerous calls at the past two meetings for a down-scaling of the Mission and especially given that additional funds are earmarked for projects that focus on issues on which the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo is already engaged.

Given the pressures placed on the peacekeeping budget and Kosovo's continued move away from instability and insecurity, the United Kingdom believes that it is long past time for UNMIK to undergo some form of reconfiguration. We look forward to receiving proposals from the Secretariat in due course.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I join others in thanking Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing.

I also express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their respective statements.

Unfortunately, the negative sequence of events that have caused instability and could generate further tensions in Kosovo continued during the reporting period. Ukraine regrets that, despite the concerns expressed by Security Council members during their discussion in February (see S/PV.7891), Kosovo institutions attempted to move ahead on transforming the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force. We consider such an approach to establish facts on the ground as having the potential to lead to heightened tensions in the region. We are worried that an attempted conversion of the Kosovo Security Force into a Kosovo army, coupled with rising ethno-nationalist sentiments, could be an explosive cocktail. That definitely does not contribute to confidence-building both among communities inside Kosovo and between Belgrade and Pristina. We commend the quick reaction by the NATO and the United States to that development and welcome the decision by Kosovo institutions to withdraw that initiative.

We have also witnessed further disturbing developments with regard to property issues, hate speech implying ethnic cleansing, incidents involving travellers from Kosovo, resistance to the process of peaceful returns, as well as the resolution of the Kosovo Assembly calling for the suspension of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. My delegation is frustrated by the reported obstruction of returns, particularly in Istok. During the first visit of the Security Council to Kosovo in 2000, in which Ukraine participated, Istok was presented as a prospective area for Serbs' returns. Seventeen years later, nothing has changed, and those who oppose returns are using same old arguments.

All those developments do not contribute to the spirit of restraint and cooperation needed to achieve the necessary progress on the implementation of the agreed commitments. Against that backdrop, we welcome the efforts of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO and UNMIK to preserving peace and stability in Kosovo. Their actions are vital for diffusing tensions and averting any further deterioration of the situation. We reiterate our call on political leaders in Belgrade and Pristina to actively work to avoid provocation, confrontation, and escalation leading to a conflict. It is important to continue the implementation of their commitments, thereby bringing benefits for all people living in the region and enhancing their European perspective.

Ukraine would like to take this opportunity to welcome the peaceful holding of the Serbian presidential elections in Kosovo. We are glad that, despite some difficulties, according to the report of the Secretary-General,

"no security incidents were reported in connection with the voting, collection or transportation of votes" (S/2017/387, para. 12).

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's observations that

"the European Union-facilitated dialogue is the best available mechanism for the peaceful resolution of differences, to the benefit of both sides" (*ibid.*, para. 47).

We support the European Union's enhanced role in the region, which has proved to be constructive and has contributed to the stabilization and peaceful development of countries in the Western Balkans and Europe in general.

Finally, we support, as we have before, the call of many other delegations to reconsider the regularity of the Council's briefings on Kosovo and to begin focused discussions on UNMIK's reconfiguration.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo.

I also express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Kuburović, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Çitaku for their statements.

Bolivia calls for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), including full respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Serbia. We believe that the attempt to establish a Kosovo army runs contrary to that resolution and poses a threat to the progress made between the parties. Accordingly, that type of action or, indeed, any action leading to an escalation of violence, is not conducive to fostering a peaceful solution and must therefore be avoided. We believe that a constructive environment must be established so as to achieve solutions leading to progress and stability. We therefore commend the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, which opens a way to a lasting solution so as to end the conflicts

affecting the region. To that end, parties must refrain from making statements containing bellicose and inflammatory rhetoric.

Bolivia encourages the parties to continue working together, in particular on the agreement concerning the establishment of the association of Serbian municipalities covered in the Brussels dialogue leading to security and human rights of Serbians in Kosovo and Metohija in which they are the majority of the population. We underscore the voluntary return of 90 members non-majority communities, especially the Roma-Ashkali-Egyptian community. Moreover, Bolivia deplores the hindering of the return of internally displaced persons in certain regions in Kosovo. We call on the parties to join efforts to ensuring their safe return to their homes.

With regard to UNMIK, we highlight the work and efforts made in cooperation with the Kosovar authorities to approve legislation strengthening capacity ensuring the protection of cultural and religious heritage, as well as its work in holding an open roundtable discussion on women and peace and security in Kosovo, on the theme "The role of women in reconciliation: building peace and security in Kosovo". We believe that women are key actors in long-term confidence-building and peace in the region.

We call on the parties to refrain from committing acts of aggression running contrary to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We call on the parties to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the dialogue and the duty to negotiate in accordance with the provisions of international law. Such efforts must be made so as to achieve lasting peace that, over the long-term, will benefit the region if the Serbs and Kosovars show the will to resolve their differences with the help of regional organizations.

Bolivia appreciates the efforts made by the European Union and agrees with the statement made in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/387), according to which,

"[t]he European Union-facilitated dialogue is the best available mechanism for the peaceful resolution of differences, to the benefit of both sides. Progress, for each party, can be achieved only by peaceful means and, regardless of electoral cycles and daily politics ...". (S/2017/387, para. 47)

Finally, Bolivia appreciates the work and efforts made by UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We encourage continued confidence-building efforts, as well as the use of peaceful means and dialogue with a view to promoting peace, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mrs. Audouard (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing, as well as the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo for their statements.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate, once again, and as others before me have done, our wish that the Security Council review how frequently it considers the situation in Kosovo. With the Council facing an ever-increasing workload, there is no longer any justification for maintaining quarterly briefings on the Kosovo issue, which is not comparable to that of crises for which the Council's robust engagement is essential.

We believe that the positive developments in Kosovo in recent years in terms of institution-building also justify efforts to refocus the actions of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as well as their coordination with other international actors in Kosovo. We once again call on the Secretary-General to make recommendations on this issue in his next report. The current standstill is unacceptable given that it is our responsibility as members of the Security Council to ensure that the measures taken by the United Nations are fully adapted to the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case at present.

France is convinced that the future of Kosovo is no longer an urgent Council matter; rather, it falls within the context of the European-Union-led political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, it is important that the parties demonstrate the highest level of proactive commitment. Beyond mere declarations of intent, we expect that all of the agreements reached will be effectively implemented as soon as possible, including the agreement on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, which is a key aspect of the dialogue. We therefore call on the Kosovo and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts, particularly on that last point, in order to produce more concrete results in the months

to come. That is a subject that we will continue to follow closely.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains, in general, a prerequisite for their respective progress on the path to European integration, which was again encouraged at the European Council on 9 and 10 March.

After the episodes of unrest in recent months, we expect more than ever that all actors show responsibility and restraint, a point that is all the more important in view of the upcoming elections in Kosovo. France is convinced that the resurgence of nationalist discourse, sometimes tinged with community-based references, poses a threat to the stability of the region, to which the peoples of Kosovo and Serbia both aspire.

In that regard, the agreement recently reached at the local level as to the demolition of the Mitrovica wall is a positive example, showing that concrete solutions can be found to foster coexistence between communities, free from political provocation and any divisive rhetoric. The fact that the recent involvement of Serbian citizens living in Kosovo in the Serbian presidential election was not accompanied by any serious incidents, thanks to the work of the Kosovo and Serbian electoral institutions and the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is another encouraging development that we welcome. Lastly, President Thaçi's choice to favour an inclusive approach with regard to a possible transformation of the status of the Kosovo security forces is also one likely to avoid an escalation of tensions, which would be as unnecessary as it would be dangerous.

Continued efforts by Kosovo to consolidate the rule of law must also remain a priority. That includes the fight against radicalization in all of its forms. We welcome the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in that regard, both locally and within the global coalition against Da'esh.

Finally, I conclude my remarks by recalling France's commitment to the relationship of trust that we have traditionally maintained with Serbia and Kosovo, as well as our support for reconciliation in the region and the implementation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, allow me to point out that the French judiciary independently rendered a decision in the Haradinaj case. French authorities cannot comment on that judicial decision, but it should in no way be interpreted politically.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive briefing. Likewise, I should like to thank the Minister of Justice of Serbia, Ms. Nela Kuburović, for her intervention. I take note of the statement made by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Allow me to begin by stressing, as I have mentioned on other occasions, that Uruguay advocates for compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) as the legal basis for a resolution of the situation in Kosovo. Strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is a fundamental principle of Uruguay's foreign policy.

We believe it is essential that the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade being facilitated by the European Union move forward and, in that regard, we express our full support for that process. The interruption in the dialogue and the delays in the implementation of the international agreements are a source of tensions and distrust in the region.

In view of the political situation that Kosovo currently faces, we encourage leaders to work in a constructive manner and to seek the speedy resumption of the Belgrade talks and the implementation of the agreements concluded. Progress on the commitments already made will contribute to the achievement of stability at the domestic and international levels, and to the improvement of the conditions and development of the people to their highest potential.

We firmly believe in the path of reconciliation. To that end, it is necessary to move toward truth and justice. Despite years of work, 1,664 cases of missing persons remain unsolved, and major questions still remain. It is imperative to make progress in that area. The families of the disappeared deserve to have access to information about the fate of their loved ones. It is a fundamental matter concerning the defence of human rights. Furthermore, addressing the situation of internally displaced persons is essential for reconciliation. Efforts by local officials to hamper returns are worrying.

Moreover, efforts should be made at the local level and in neighbouring countries to combat ethno-nationalist discourse and incitement to hatred

and resentment. Discrimination and ultranationalism have been the cause of great misfortune for humankind. Respect for the religious and cultural specificities of each community, as well as policies oriented towards minority groups, are essential to consolidate peace.

UNMIK undertakes important work for the population of Kosovo, via collaboration with the leaders of Pristina and Belgrade. UNMIK also works at the regional, municipal and community levels where, among other activities, it spearheads activities directed at minority groups and young people. I specifically wish to highlight the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, the theme of which was "The role of women in reconciliation: building peace and security in Kosovo", held on 15 March under the auspices of UNMIK. Uruguay believes that the participation of women at all levels is indispensable for the achievement of sustainable

peace processes. Truth, justice, reconciliation, security, equal rights, guarantees and inclusive processes are the foundations of sustainable peace.

In addition to the work of UNMIK, I wish to recognize the role of the European Union as facilitator of the dialogues and as a cooperating partner, the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, as well as the support of the entire United Nations system.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.



Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7941st meeting

 Tuesday, 16 May 2017, 3 p.m.
 New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardì
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Colombia (3 to 5 May 2017)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Colombia (3 to 5 May 2017)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the two co-leads of the Security Council mission to Colombia, which took place from 3 to 5 May, namely, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Uruguay.

The Security Council mission to Colombia, which Uruguay had the honour of co-leading with the United Kingdom, took place from 3 to 5 May. The purpose of the visit was to express the support of the Council for the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, as referred to in the terms of reference of the Security Council mission, as well as to hear from all stakeholder: the Government, the people of Colombia, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP), the United Nations Mission in Colombia and the country team, and to ascertain the progress made in and the difficulties of the process.

The visit took place over two days. I shall report on the activities conducted on 4 May before handing over to my colleague, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, who will describe the activities of the second day.

On 4 May, we held institutional meetings in the city of Bogotá. Those took place in three key instances. The first was a meeting of the Council members with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, who stressed the timeliness of the visit, given that the parties were working to complete the process of laying down of arms within the 180-day term set out in the agreement. Other aspects of

the process and the Council's potential contributions to it were also discussed there.

Council members also met with the Resident Coordinator and all the bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations country team. During the visit, we were able to appreciate the excellent work of Special Representative Jean Arnault and the United Nations Mission in Colombia, and we thank them for all of the support that they provided to the Security Council mission.

Also of great importance were the meetings with Government authorities.

The President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos, received us as members of the Security Council and then held an extended meeting with the highest authorities, including, besides the President himself, the Vice-President, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the High Commissioner for Peace and several other senior officials of the Government of Colombia.

In addition to thanking us for the visit, the President also expressed gratitude for the support that the Council is extending to the peace process in Colombia. We also heard from the Congressional Peace Commission, which brings together the entire Colombian political spectrum. Its representatives stressed the importance of safeguarding the achievements made as part of the peace process.

Another key moment was an exchange with the National Commission for Follow-up, Impulse and Verification of the Implementation of Peace Agreement, in which Mr. Sergio Jaramillo Caro, High Commissioner for Peace, and Mr. Iván Márquez, Commander of the FARC-EP, also participated. At that meeting, Mr. Jaramillo referred to the progress on the issues that are being worked on as peace is implemented, such as, *inter alia*, the gender perspective, indigenous peoples and comprehensive economic recovery strategies. The FARC-EP referred to the importance of reconciliation, to the system of truth, justice, reparations, non-repetition, and guarantees, especially in the areas of security and legal and political matters.

We also held a meeting with members of civil society. Several organizations expressed their concern about insecurity and killings in local communities. The Council also heard the same concern from the Government and the FARC. We share that concern and call for institutional protection measures to be

implemented to respond to the threat of armed groups. Women's organizations pointed out the disproportionate harm suffered by women in conflict and post-conflict environments. We acknowledged the fundamental importance of the gender perspective in peace processes. Members of civil society suggested the establishment of a successor United Nations mission that should be deployed throughout the territory of Colombia. During the visit, we witnessed the commitment of the parties, the goodwill and the hope that Colombians have for the results of this peace process.

As a general assessment of those meetings, I would like to highlight the commitment of all participants in the peace process to continuing their best efforts to move the process forward, with the awareness of the difficulties that were raised and knowing that further difficulties will arise in future, as is normal for such processes. Several of these difficulties derive from the difficult conditions in relation to building the federal zones, which are in very rural and distant areas, where highways and all the other infrastructure that is needed for their installation still need to be built. Another factor that has had a negative impact is the climate, with heavy rains making tasks extremely difficult. Another difficulty relates the pace of the adoption of legal and administrative measures for the purpose of reintegrating former combatants in civilian life. In all cases, these points were brought up not as complaints but to indicate the difficulties for which efforts must be made if they are to be resolved.

I now give the floor to my colleague Ambassador Matthew Rycroft.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the President for organizing, presiding over and co-leading our highly successful visit to Colombia 10 days ago. It was a great privilege to co-lead it with you, Sir. I also want to thank all of the Permanent Representatives around the table for taking part and for participating so energetically. I think we all got a lot from the visit.

As the President said, my job is to brief the Security Council on the second day of the visit, when the Council travelled to the Vista Hermosa, municipality in the Meta department in the south. It was approximately one hour by airplane, plus an hour by helicopter, south of Bogotá. We visited the La Reforma local transitional zone, where the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) are laying down their arms. We were accompanied by Jean Arnault,

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, by senior Government officials, including the Colombian Foreign Minister and the Colombian Permanent Representative, and by the High Commissioner for Peace, plus members of the FARC-EP secretariat, including Iván Márquez and Pastor Alape.

There were three key elements to the day. First of all, when we arrived, we received a fascinating briefing from leaders of the Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. They gave us a tour of their site, which gave us an insight into the challenging terrain that they have to operate in but also the unique character of the Mechanism and the remarkable joint working between the United Nations, the Colombian Government and the FARC members of that Mechanism.

Then we went on to a town hall-style meeting at a community centre with members of the local community and the Governor of the Meta department. The rain by then was beating down on the corrugated iron roof of the hall, and we were absolutely crammed in shoulder to shoulder. There were many community leaders, women, children, teachers and others present, who gave us fascinating insights into what peace means for that community.

Thirdly, and in a way even more remarkably, we had an opportunity to meet members of the FARC-EP at one of the newly built reception centres, just outside their camp area, along with the Special Representative, the Foreign Minister, the Permanent Representative and the High Commissioner for Peace. It was a fascinating site to see, at very short notice, all of these families coming to us, carrying their chairs with us to this new place to sit down together and really overcome the conflict, which, until recently, had driven the country apart for 52 years.

I mentioned before the challenging weather conditions. Our bus did get stuck completely in the mud on our way back to our helicopter, but we managed to navigate that challenge successfully. I think we all left confident that the parties — between them — can navigate all challenges that the peace process is speeding up.

I want to leave the Council with the three main conclusions that I think we came away. First of all, it is remarkable how much has already happened since the Peace Agreement was signed. Yes, we heard a lot about the challenges. We heard about the difficulties and the obstacles, but, actually, when we consider how much

has been done, it is very impressive, particularly given the challenging terrain and so on.

Almost 7,000 members of the FARC-EP have arrived smoothly in the transition zones, and they have begun their process of laying down of arms. That Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, led by the United Nations, is working well. Twenty per cent of those observers are women. And the local community spoke powerfully about the positive results that they hoped to see as a result of the peace process. It was fascinating to hear FARC members pay tribute to the leadership of the military and the police of Colombia. That is the first point: how far the parties and the people of Colombia have come.

Secondly, I think we heard vividly about the impact of the conflict on the communities most affected by it, particularly away from the big cities, and the challenges ahead. We heard about killings of community leaders, as illegal armed groups moved into new areas. We heard about the importance of sustained implementation of all parts of the Agreement, not just the bit about the laying down of arms, and that is going to be crucial, particularly for those communities most affected by the conflict.

Thirdly, I think that we were all impressed by the commitment of both parties to stay the course, to see this through, to make sure that every single part of the Agreement is implemented, with continued support from the international community. I think we heard that both on the first day and on the second day, out in the field. As I said, yes, they are real challenges ahead, but I think that having that united view that peace is now irreversible was a strong message for us all to take home.

In conclusion, I think it is worth noting again in this Chamber the strength and the unity of the Security Council support for Colombia, for the people of Colombia, for the Government of Colombia and for the FARC as they continue to implement this crucial Peace Agreement. The issue, I think, is still a ray of sunlight on our agenda, and I hope that we all feel privileged to be able to lend our support to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. As we said in our presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/6) upon our return, we all remain fully committed to the peace process and are determined to play a constructive and active role in the months ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank the United Nations Mission for supporting the visit and for its tireless work in challenging conditions, as well as the Secretariat for all of its efforts during their visit. I also thank Ambassador Mejía Vélez for everything that she and her colleagues and the Government of Colombia have done.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be brief. I want to thank you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for their briefings on the Security Council visit to Colombia. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez.

The Security Council's visit to Colombia is historic for the Council. We meet in the Council almost daily to meet the fundamental responsibility entrusted to us by the States Members of the United Nations — the maintenance of international peace and security. On some occasions, that sacred duty leads us down difficult paths, but on others like this one it unites us in a fraternal bond.

Today, Colombia symbolizes the importance of the Council for the world by maintaining unity while respecting the sovereign decisions of States and firmly supporting the peacebuilding process. The frank dialogue with President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, his Ministers and Government representatives at all levels allowed us to fully understand both the great achievements that have been made in the process as the challenges to the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

You, Mr. President, have identified many such challenges, and we agree with your assessment. Some of those challenges include meteorological conditions, the remoteness of certain locations and the building of sites for depositing weapons. Additionally, listening to the leaders and members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) has allowed us to understand their concerns and fears for the future, as well as their decision to abandon armed resistance, lay down their weapons and take up their struggle in the political arena instead. Throughout, the Government and the FARC-EP have put their doubts behind them, and the commitment, determination and courage of both sides

is evident. We note with great satisfaction the amicable interactions and environment between the parties.

I recall that during our meeting with members of Congress, we all pointed out the importance of political leadership during peace processes. I must commend both the political leadership of President Santos Calderón and the leadership and political resolve of the FARC-EP to embark upon this difficult path. During the same meeting, one of the congresswomen noted that there is a third party to the peace process — the victims, the third vertex of the virtuous triangle. The forgiveness of victims that have opted for the peace process, despite its difficulties, is fundamental. That virtuous triangle is the secret to the success of Colombia's peace process.

The Final Peace Agreement is a comprehensive and complex agreement that establishes a framework of responsibilities and measures to ensure effective reintegration and reconciliation. It also creates opportunities for resolving the structural issues that led to the armed conflict, such as integrated rural reform. One of the most concerning consequences, as was mentioned, is the assassination of community leaders. We applaud the decision of President Santos Calderón of creating a commission to ensure the safety of the population, but also of presiding over it himself and personally overseeing its success.

Finally, I want to emphasize the support of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for the peace process and to highlight the efforts of the United Nations team led by Mr. Jean Arnault. I also want to pay a special tribute to Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, and to Colombia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mejía Vélez, two women who have worked diligently to guide this difficult process.

We congratulate you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you have led the Council on this mission. I think I speak for everyone in saying that we stand behind all that you have said. You have admirably discharged the lofty duties of President of the Security Council, and I would like to very sincerely thank you. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for having co-led the process. His support has been invaluable to the success of our mission. We know that the road ahead is difficult, but the Council is firmly committed to supporting Colombia, upon their request.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President, the United Kingdom Ambassador, who co-led the mission, and all the members of the Security Council. On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, I thank the Council for having gone to my country to see first hand what is taking place, to be informed by the "prime movers of Colombia" — to quote Ambassador Rosselli — by the State, by civil society, by ex-combatants, who, as we build peace through the implementation of the Agreement, need to be increasingly united. That was also the perceived goal of the visit and of the Council's message to Colombia — one of unity and of seizing the enormous opportunity of having reached a negotiated rather than elusive peace.

The Council vote of confidence in the peace process will bear fruit despite the specific difficulties that have been voiced in the Chamber. We are at a crucial stage in the peacebuilding process, one in which the support of the Security Council and the Secretary-General have been unwavering and, in which my Government has asked that the process be verified and monitored through this tripartite mechanism. We are faced with the formidable challenge of maintaining the methodology of work on three fronts, which must now transition to a new process aimed at ensuring the economic, social and political reintegration of ex-combatants.

I think that this stage of the implementation of the political mission of the tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure the ceasefire and disarmament timetable has been critical. I will employ the metaphor used by Ambassador Rycroft, that the peace process is not longer the bus stuck in the mud but rather a venture with tangible results. Considering that the past eight months have resulted in no conflict-related deaths, no wounded, no attacks on national structures and no abductions, 2,670 lives have been saved by the Peace Agreement — as President Santos Calderón pointed out. Meanwhile, we continue the process of providing reparations to the victims, which has been a core issue since the beginning of the negotiations, as well as land restitution. The degree to which the victims feel compensated and taken into account will determine how successfully the deep wounds left by the protracted Colombian conflict will heal.

The Council's visit to Vista Hermosa showed them the progress in the laying down of arms, the ceasefire and the monitoring of such activities. There will, undoubtedly, be setbacks but we are confident that the

process will proceed according to the agreed timetable, despite the enormous challenges it entails.

I want to share with the Council another major piece of news that we heard about yesterday: that another area in the Andes, in the department of Antioquia, El Orejón, which over past decades experienced what may be one of the worst wars ever and was infamous for being the most heavily mined Colombian municipality, was visited yesterday by the Foreign Minister and representatives of the international community, who certified it as being free of landmines, free of illegal crops and free of clashes involving the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo.

This model, in which agencies of the Colombian Government, coordinated in the framework of the border plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, complemented by 17 social and infrastructure projects, made it possible to deliver results to a community that include what we hope will be Day D+181, namely, the first 100 days post-conflict and of the laying down of arms; to continue the task of rebuilding the first 50 municipalities with respect to their social fabric, through reconciliation and the strengthening of the security mechanisms that, as the Council has noted, are of concern to many people; and to bring to all Colombians — why not? — that rural prosperity that has eluded them until now.

Finally, the goals and challenges involved are many. We acknowledge the Council's concern over the murders of certain social leaders and human rights defenders, as reported in recent months. All of the relevant bodies of the Colombian Government are working to investigate, capture and bring those responsible to justice. The authorities have noted that although some cases involve killings associated with the defence of human rights, the Government is aware of the damaging presence of other factors outside the law. They are advancing negotiations in the area of public security, an area that we also have to address.

Lastly, as Ambassador Sacha would say, the Council's support is extraordinary. Truly, on behalf of all Colombians, I want to say that it was extremely moving to see its commitment, dedication and determination to ensure that this exercise was a positive one. I should like also to thank the Secretariat for all its work, and we hope that this positive news will continue at this second stage we as Colombians are beginning, with the support of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.



Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7942nd meeting

Wednesday, 17 May 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bermúdez	(Uruguay)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

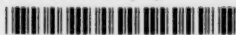
The situation in Somalia

Letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/404)

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2017/408)

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17-14055 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10 05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/404)

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2017/408)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; and Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Mr. Zenenga and Mr. Madeira are joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Mogadishu.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/404, which contains a letter dated 5 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2017/408, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on Somalia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zenenga.

Mr. Zenenga: When Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keating addressed the Council two months ago (see (S/PV.7905), Somalia's new Cabinet had just been announced and the Secretary-General had just visited the country at a time that he aptly described as a moment of both tragedy and hope.

The tragedy, emanating from the severe drought, continues to unfold. The humanitarian crisis has deteriorated more rapidly than was originally projected. Assessments conducted in April indicate critical levels

of acute malnutrition among pastoral and agricultural populations, and also among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Baidoa and Mogadishu. The expected relief from the Gu rains has not materialized. The rains arrived late and a substantial loss of livestock has already occurred. Food security is also expected to further decline. The crisis is unlikely to abate any time soon. Mortality and protection risks, especially for women and children, continue to rise as drought conditions force nomads to migrate from rural areas to towns. Sexual violence in the IDP camps is on the rise.

The scaled-up response of the humanitarian agencies has averted a famine thus far, but the crisis is unlikely to abate any time soon. The needs for humanitarian assistance are increasing faster than the pace of the response. So far, only half of the 3 million people in need of food have been reached. A total of \$669 million has been received or pledged for the ongoing humanitarian effort, leaving a gap of \$831 million in the revised 2017 humanitarian response plan. Donor contributions and commitments therefore need to be further scaled up.

In parallel, steps must be taken to build Somalia's capacity to withstand recurrent humanitarian crises triggered by extreme climatic conditions. Somalia will continue to lurch from one avoidable humanitarian crisis to another unless resilience is fostered by addressing the country's structural problems. Investment in capacity-building for relevant State institutions and development-oriented approaches should be prioritized to enable the country to better cope with future humanitarian crises. Improving security, generating revenues and fighting corruption will also increase resilience.

Somalia now has a unique opportunity to overcome its current fragility and build a functional State in the coming four years. To realize this vision, the country needs to make progress on the following priorities.

The first is building security and police forces that are capable of protecting its population and that can start taking over responsibility for security from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The second is promoting economic recovery so that it can generate revenues, create jobs, start delivering basic social services and reduce the country's overdependence on donors. The third is instituting appropriate measures for effective management of public funds, coupled with rooting out corruption — which is as great a threat to stability as the prevailing insecurity — and accelerating

progress in clearing arrears in order to secure financing from international financial institutions through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative process. The fourth is completing the review of the Constitution and strengthening federalism. The fifth and last is fostering reconciliation and resolving the many long-standing local conflicts in the country. The universal elections to be held in 2020 will be a defining litmus test of the progress that has been made towards building a properly functioning State.

In the past two months, the Federal Government and federal member state leaders have taken important first steps that have reinforced the prevailing hope that these key peace- and State-building priorities can be accomplished during the new Government's current term. They have demonstrated the will to secure the political agreements that are essential to such progress. The leaders recognize that the current credibility gap dividing Government institutions from the general population needs to be addressed. They have also shown the necessary commitment to working with the private sector and engaging constructively with Somalia's international partners.

On 16 April, just two months into President Farmajo's term of office, the leaders concluded a political agreement on the long-awaited national security architecture. It defines the size, structure, composition, command and control, and financing arrangements for Somalia's security forces, based on a federal model. Its significance is enormous. It provides a framework for the accelerated development of acceptable, accountable, affordable and able security forces. It will also have a catalytic effect on efforts to reinforce governance and increase revenue generation. In addition, it provides a model for other essential political agreements on such key issues as the management of natural resources, revenue sharing and the broader definition of the respective powers and responsibilities of the Federal Government and the federal member states. The agreement makes it possible for international partners to support Somalia's security sector in a more coherent manner. The national security architecture agreement and the new policing model, adopted last year, should now be complemented by a political agreement defining a federal model for the justice and corrections sectors.

As we welcome the advent of a new chapter in Somalia and the unique opportunities it has unlocked, we are not oblivious to the scale and complexity of the

hurdles facing the Somali Government during the long four-year journey that lies ahead. Continued insecurity, owing primarily but not exclusively to Al-Shabaab attacks, remains the biggest challenge. We applaud AMISOM for providing the backbone for security in Somalia over the past 10 years. Its joint efforts with the Somali security forces, with support from international partners, have made possible the progress the country has achieved so far.

However, Al-Shabaab still has the capacity to disrupt and impede the peace- and State-building process. Fighting it requires a multi-pronged approach that combines staging AMISOM and Somali national army offensive operations; conducting special counter-terrorism operations by those of Somalia's partners in a position to do so; fostering the extension of State authority; addressing governance deficits; and resolving local conflicts, while at the same time providing incentives to elements wishing to take advantage of President Farmajo's offer of amnesty.

Support enabling AMISOM to carry out effective operations must accompany and complement the implementation of the national security architecture agreement. There is no question of choosing one over the other. In the short term, therefore, AMISOM needs predictable funding, ideally through assessed contributions. Offensive operations by AMISOM and the Somali forces will yield sustainable outcomes only if they are planned in a coordinated manner and conducted in compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law. The current humanitarian crisis should be taken into account, vulnerable populations properly protected and arrangements put in place for holding and building recovered areas, including local administrations acceptable to the local communities.

The vigorous implementation of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy is important as we continue to enable AMISOM operations and help to accelerate the building of Somali security forces. Al-Shabaab feeds on shortfalls in governance, particularly in the areas of human rights, justice and the rule of law, and the delivery of basic services. An inclusive approach to governance and access to basic services is therefore critical to preventing and countering violent extremism. We welcome the Federal Government's efforts to mediate between Galmudug state and Ahl Al-Sunna Wal-Jama'a. The dialogue must continue. Reconciliation with Ahl Al-Sunna is critical to the viability and security of Galmudug state,

including its efforts to address the threat from piracy. While it is premature to talk of a return to the peak era of piracy off the coast of Somalia, the recent hijackings of ships remind us that the progress achieved so far could be reversed. Robust counter-piracy efforts, including increased patrolling of Somali waters, should continue, accompanied by greater support to building the capacity of Somalia's maritime law-enforcement services.

The Somali institutions responsible for implementing the Government's agenda over the next four years are suffering from severe capacity shortfalls. The target dates set out in the political agreement on the national security architecture and other plans will not be met without substantial and coherent support from international partners. The work related to the national security architecture must be harmonized with arrangements for the conditions-based transition of primary responsibility for the country's security from AMISOM to Somalia's security forces, which is expected to start in 2018. That will require a high degree of coordination that exceeds the current capacity of the country's institutions. Similarly, timely progress in reviewing the Constitution, synchronized with both the painstaking process of securing political agreements on key issues and the preparations for the 2020 elections in a challenging political and security context, requires complex coordination between the Somali institutions concerned and reinforcement of their capacity.

Such cohesion is imperative not just among the relevant Somali institutions but also among the many international partners that deliver support to Somalia's security sector and its key political processes. We must acknowledge that the absence of an agreed-on national security architecture and the disorganized delivery by international partners of security-sector support over the past eight years have contributed equally to the lack of progress in building capable and legitimate security forces in Somalia.

That is why the outcome of the London Conference on Somalia, which took place six days ago, and the joint African Union (AU) and United Nations review of AMISOM and Somali security forces, which is currently under way, are so important. The London Conference provided a unique opportunity for Somalia to present its agenda to international partners and reach agreement on the framework for cooperation to realize key priorities, anchored in the principle of mutual accountability. That is reflected in two key agreements that came out of the Conference.

One is the security pact between Somalia and 42 international partners. The pact endorses the national security architecture agreement, sets out milestones for the rapid development of Somalia's security forces and recognizes that AMISOM remains critical to securing Somalia, while also expressing support for a conditions-based transition from AMISOM to Somali security forces, with clear target dates linked to the agreed milestones. It also outlines a coordination and implementation mechanism to ensure the coherent delivery of support by international partners.

The second document defines a new partnership for Somalia. It sets out a mutual accountability framework, as well as specific partnership principles and enabling actions, based on which Somalia and its international partners will work together to meet the priority political, security and economic recovery goals identified in Somalia's national development plan. Somalia and its partners agreed to meet again in October, to follow up on the commitments made in London. At that meeting, they will consider a financing strategy for the national security architecture, in line with the comprehensive approach to security. The London Conference has therefore added momentum to the efforts to advance Somalia's key priorities.

The joint AU-United Nations review focuses on six key tasks: first, establishing a baseline assessment of AMISOM and the Somali security forces; secondly, identifying the necessary tasks for AMISOM, taking into account the national security architecture and the comprehensive approach to security; thirdly, identifying the range of security actors that play a role in Somalia and making recommendations on the preferred relationships and division of responsibilities among them; fourthly, making recommendations on AMISOM's future configuration to facilitate a smooth conditions-based transition to Somali security forces; fifthly, developing recommendations on what a conditions-based transition should look like and, finally, identifying the required support to AMISOM and the Somali security forces, tied to the transition plan. The findings and recommendations of the review will be presented to the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council for their consideration.

The joint review builds on the strategic assessment of the United Nations presence in Somalia, which was conducted from 5-15 March, at the Council's request. In his letter of 5 May, addressed to you, Sir, the Secretary-

General transmitted the results of the assessment. I wish to emphasize the Secretary-General's observation in the letter that, as the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia is adjusted according to new priorities, some elements of the United Nations support to Somalia over the next four years will create demands for increased resources. We therefore trust that the Security Council and other relevant legislative bodies will support the recommendations of the strategic assessment and continue to provide the necessary resources required to enable the United Nations system to support Somalia's ambitious undertakings.

I wish to thank all members of the Council for their strong and unified position on supporting Somalia's peacebuilding and State-building agenda and for supporting the United Nations team in Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zenenga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Madeira.

Mr. Madeira: Let me start by thanking you, Sir, for inviting me to address the Security Council and brief it on Somalia. I bring greetings to the Council from the African Union Chairperson, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

We are encouraged by the response that the international community has given to the appeal to support the drought-stricken population of Somalia. However, as much as there have been clear shows of generosity, the chasm is deep and wide and requires further contributions. We look forward to those contributions in the very near future.

We are meeting in the aftermath of the London Conference, which took place last week, barely three months since President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed emerged victorious from a violence-free and acceptably fair election, during which power was transferred to him in an exemplary and peaceful manner. That is a major feat of unique significance, if we take into account that Somalia is still a country plagued by insurgency, violent extremism and terrorism. The fact that the London Conference was able to come up with decisions whose implementation will be a game-changer in Somalia, with a decisive and lasting impact on the overall outlook of the country in the near future, was due to the immense preparatory work and strategic decisions taken by the leadership of Somalia, in particular President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed

and his Government in all important areas of endeavour in the country.

Indeed, the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, in coordination with other line ministries under the Federal Parliament, have embarked on a consultative programme in preparation for an aggressive push forward in the country's political and constitutional reforms ahead of the 2020 or 2021 one-person-one-vote universal suffrage.

During the period under review, the Federal Government of Somalia hosted Galmudug authorities and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a political dialogue and negotiations in Mogadishu. That is an important step forward and a clear indication that sustained efforts towards reconciliation are and should continue to be a permanent feature on the road towards building a peaceful and stable Somalia.

On 16 April, the Federal Government of Somalia held the first national consultative forum, which was chaired by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia himself. It was attended by the Speaker of the national Parliament, the Prime Minister and the regional leaders of Puntland, Jubaland, South West, HirShabelle and Galmudug states. In that encounter, these Somali leaders reached a historic political agreement to integrate regional and federal forces into a coherent national security architecture capable of gradually taking on full responsibility for the security of the country. The leaders agreed upon the national security policy and the guidelines to follow. Its implementation was spearheaded by the national security council, which is chaired by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. They further agreed on establishing regional security councils, which would be chaired by the regional State leaders.

This approved national security architecture is an unheard of milestone in the Somalia of the past 26 years. Much as the road ahead is still bumpy and tricky, these encouraging developments put Somalia at another level, and the country is clearly on the verge of opening a new page in its history. We are galvanized by the new leadership of Somalia, propelled to power through a huge popular mandate and committed to better governance, inclusive politics, the strengthening of State institutions, the delivery of services to the people, promoting transparency and respect for human rights, fighting corruption, creating jobs and

building a strong partnership to degrade and contain Al-Shabaab terrorists.

The April agreement on the Somalia national security extension for the building of affordable, inclusive, effective and professional Somali security forces, based on a collective vision and political agreements between the Federal Government of Somalia and Somalia's regional federal member states, combined with other security policy instruments adopted by the previous Administration, are solid building blocks in the construction of a strong barrier against insecurity and instability. However, military actions, law enforcement and intelligence operations, though important and necessary, cannot succeed alone. There is a need to continue to build a strong partnership for peace between the Government of Somalia and the Somali people through their community leaders, religious denominations, business communities and academia, youth organizations and civil society in general in the pursuit of a shared national agenda in which everyone wins something and no one loses everything.

We applaud President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo's decision to extend amnesty and encourage those Somalis who have fallen into the hands of Al-Shabaab to renounce violence and join their brothers and sisters in the rebuilding of the country and in the creation of a better future for themselves and for their families. These and other reconciliation approaches adopted by the Government are as important as the military operations undertaken by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and by the Somali national security forces in reducing the number of recruits to Al-Shabaab. We can only support President Abdullahi in this, as we, like him, believe that it is the continued and coherent pursuit of this multipronged comprehensive approach to security that will eventually deliver lasting peace and stability to Somalia and to the East African region in general. We therefore call on all national and international partners to help build the infrastructure that President Abdullahi will need to accommodate those Somalis who heed his appeal and are ready to renounce violence, reintegrate into society and be constructive citizens of their country again.

Securing the main supply routes and transforming them into violence-free enclaves — where a concomitant delivery of safety, security, governance, jobs, trades and economic and social amenities and

other services to the populations living along these arteries can take place — is an important way to extend the State presence throughout the country and bring the Government closer to the people and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to Al-Shabaab's violent extremist ideological narrative.

The Somalia national security architecture is a medium- to long-term project. There is a need to provide for an approach that also takes charge and addresses Somalia's current and short-term security concerns. To this effect, Somalia needs to have well-trained, well-equipped and readily available forces to perform these duties and operate alongside AMISOM to continue to hold liberated towns and cities, secure the main supply routes and undertake joint or coordinated offensive operations to continue to disrupt, degrade and contain Al-Shabaab militants. The Guulwade plan with regard to Somali national army troops, in which the United Nations has invested and is currently supporting to the tune of 10,900 troops should be factored in and be made part of the force that should, as of now, continue to take on and confront Al-Shabaab and degrade it while the implementation of the national security architecture is taking place.

The towns of Jamaame, Jilib, Saacow and Bu'ale, along the Juba corridor, and that Harardhere in the north-eastern coastline are today Al-Shabaab's holding grounds, bomb and manufacturing bases, planning centres, military equipment and reception and holding sites, transit points and training areas. To enhance security in Mogadishu and properly protect the major population of Mogadishu's centres throughout the country, Juba Corridor II Operation and a north-eastern coastline offensive must take place. They should be allowed to take place. We should concur for them to take place. Partners must come clear on where they stand on the liberation of these cities.

The conclusion that the risk of grave violations being committed during the Juba Corridor II Operation is generally high needs to be revised and be based on objectively proven and observable assumptions. As the troops to be committed in this offensive will have passed through pre-certification on human rights due diligence policy before the offensive begins, there is no intention of carrying out this operation with individuals with proven, recorded criminal records. We intend to bring decent people to this operation. Therefore, we need to be clear when we say that the probability of human rights violations is high. We need to know how

we came to that conclusion, since we have not seen people in those regions and we have not counted the people who are going to take this offensive and nobody knows them yet.

Yesterday, on 16 May, the African Union (AU) and United Nations joint review process commenced. This exercise aims at providing details on what needs to be in place and done between now and the date AMISOM is scheduled to commence the drawdown to allow the Somali national security forces to progressively assume the security responsibilities of the country. We are happy that we have come to an agreement that this should no longer be an exercise between the African Union and the United Nations alone as it used to be in the past.

The full participation of, and interaction with, the Somali authorities and stakeholders in the spelling-out of tasks, functions, resources, role players, coordination and other requisite activities during the review is of critical importance. The Somali Government must be fully involved in the AU, United Nations, AMISOM review exercise, and they should take the lead. They should tell us what they want to see happen: how many resources; what type of resources they would want to see in place; how much training they want the military to have, so that we can effectively implement what they want and not what we want them to want.

Until the drawdown commences and the exit process is completed, it is important that AMISOM be provided with regular, predictable and dependable funding and the requisite logistical support, force enablers and force multipliers that would allow it to successfully accomplish its mandate side by side with the Somali national security forces.

Years of uncoordinated individual partner involvement in support of the Somali national security forces and AMISOM have yielded very limited results. It is important that the Security Council explore the possibility of enhancing the output facilitated by this bilateral assistance by bringing some order, coherence, coordination and direction in the way partner support is provided and delivered to both AMISOM and, in particular, to the Somali national security sector. That would ensure that its content and quality is adequate, fit for purpose and complementary to the efforts to achieve common, specific Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM stabilization objectives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Madeira for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for their briefings and for all of the progress that they and their teams are making.

This is a well-timed meeting, coming as it does so soon after the successful London Somalia Conference last week on 11 May. We met at what is both a time of struggle but also a time of hope for the people of Somalia. The severe drought continues to cause daily suffering. The risk of famine remains high. Yes, the international community is making progress with significant humanitarian pledges; but we cannot afford to be complacent. There is still much more that needs to be done if we are to avoid a famine.

In London last week the Secretary-General presented a revised humanitarian response plan seeking \$1.5 billion dollars for 2017 in order to scale up the United Nations response. We must work collectively to help increase Somalia's long-term resilience at the same time as tackling the immediate humanitarian needs.

Whereas the drought provides significant reasons for concern, we also recognize that this is a period of hope and optimism for Somalia. There has been good progress on both political and security issues.

I was proud to attend the London Conference last week, and I witnessed first-hand the renewed energy and resolve of the Federal Government of Somalia and of the federal member states to seize the opportunities of this new Administration. I was also glad to see the very strong commitment of Somalia's international partners to supporting that progress in Somalia on political and security issues, in a new partnership.

A crucial milestone was the conclusion of the electoral process and the peaceful, swift transfer of power, culminating in the appointment of a new Government. That truly was a historic moment in Somalia's emergence from conflict.

The new Government has set out its priorities, and it is a daunting list ahead: responding to the drought; tackling corruption; building Somalia's security capacity to tackle Al-Shabaab; reforming the

Constitution; implementing the federalism project; and rejuvenating the economy. Those are enormous challenges ahead. However, last week I witnessed the necessary political will to address them, as well as a sense of momentum and energy that now needs to translate into tangible progress.

The coming period will be about building a stable federal settlement, most urgently in the area of security. But we also need to ensure that commitments to address fundamental constitutional issues on power and resource-sharing are implemented and get the high-level political attention that they need. Finding a model to make one-person one-vote elections a reality and agreeing an electoral law by 2018 will not be straightforward; but getting those things right will be essential for Somalia's long-term stability. International-community support, coordinated by AMISOM, will be needed to support Somali decision-making.

We thank the Secretary-General for the strategic review of the United Nations presence in Somalia to ensure that the United Nations is best configured to support this next chapter for Somalia. We agree with its recommendations, in particular the emphasis on supporting the federal member states to achieve more inclusive, stable politics across the country.

Effective security will be essential to underpin the political and economic progress and to prevent recurring humanitarian crises. The security pact agreed in London sets out the agreed version of Somali-led security institutions and forces. They need to be affordable, acceptable and accountable. They need to have the ability to provide the security and protection that the people of Somalia deserve and need, as part of a comprehensive approach to security. Implementing all of this will be a key priority over the coming months.

On the international side, we need to coordinate better, provide more coherent support and work together to implement that Somali vision of security. In the months ahead we will need strong political will from Somalia to implement reforms together with the continued support from the international community. This is a moment of opportunity, and we look forward to working alongside the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and all of Somalia's partners and supporters to convert strong commitments into action.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Perhaps you would agree with me, Mr. President,

that the election of President Farmajo, with broad popular support, the establishment of the new Somali Government, as well as the concrete steps taken to realize the hopes and aspirations of the Somali people through the establishment of State institutions, the fight against terrorism and the realization of economic and social development, signal a new beginning that points to the establishment of a strong and stable Somalia. That requires an intensification of the international support provided to Somalia that is commensurate with the priorities of the Somali Government, as well as improved coordination with the Somali partners with a view to avoiding duplicity.

It is also important to expedite the implementation of the agreements reached a few days ago in London with regard to the security pact and a new partnership for Somalia. On the other hand, terrorism continues to pose a real danger to the gains realized in Somalia in the recent past. That danger is not confined to Somalia; it extends to other countries both within and outside the region, which requires the promotion of international and regional efforts to put an end to Al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations. In that regard, I commend the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for all the sacrifices it has made while working with the Somali armed forces.

We look forward to the expeditious implementation of the agreements between the Somali parties signed on 16 April 2017. The agreements provide a concrete strategy for establishing a strong, united and professional Somali security force that can shoulder the responsibility of providing protection and security in Somalia. However, it is important that the need to take gradual steps in reducing the size of AMISOM as it moves towards the winding down of the Mission in 2020 be taken into account.

We believe that it is also extremely important to support the national security, military and law-enforcement institutions that fight terrorism, as well as those institutions that provide basic services in order to maintain peace and security. Support is also required for the establishment of strong State institutions that uphold the rule of law and for a review of the country's Constitution. Accordingly, international efforts by all members of the international community, in particular the United Nations, must be intensified, in accordance with the priorities set by the Somalis themselves.

Furthermore, redoubled international and regional efforts are needed to assist Somalia in dealing with the humanitarian crisis resulting from the drought. The effects of drought extend beyond the humanitarian sphere to the economic, security and political situation in the country. It is therefore crucial to support and enhance the capacities of Somalia in terms of prevention and early warning and in dealing with the recurring crises in the country.

In conclusion, we stress our determination to continue to support Somalia with a view to establishing a strong and stable State for the benefit, welfare and progress of the Somali people.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Uruguay for convening today's meeting. China has listened carefully to the statements by Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, and by Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia.

At present, Somalia is entering an important period of national reconstruction. Since the end of last year, Somalia has successfully held federal parliamentary and presidential elections, and a new Government was established early this year. By doing so, it has achieved a peaceful transfer of power, which is an important step in national reconstruction. China welcomes all of this.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) have made positive contributions to these developments, for which China wishes to express appreciation. On the other hand, we must note that Somalia still faces severe challenges in the political, security, economic and humanitarian areas. At present, there are 6.2 million people in Somalia lacking food, approximately 3 million of whom await urgent food assistance.

There is still a long way to go for Somalia to achieve long-lasting peace and stability and economic development. The international community should pay more attention and provide stronger support to Somalia.

First, it is important to adhere to Somali-led and Somali-owned principles, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, supporting its capacity-building in the areas of security and

governance, and making sure that they are able to shoulder their responsibility for national security and consolidate the positive momentum in the peace process. At the same time, Somalia's economic reconstruction and humanitarian situation is an area where the international community should continue to provide assistance and support. The relevant parties should provide precise planning for assistance and cooperation for Somalia in order to take the process of national reconstruction forward in a steady manner.

Secondly, the international community should strengthen cooperation on Somalia among the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and regional countries in an ongoing manner. The international community should support addressing African problems in African ways. It should also support the AU and regional and subregional organizations in playing important roles in resolving Africa's flashpoint issues. The international community must support AMISOM and UNSOM as they continue to implement their mandates. At the same time, the Security Council should send more positive messages and, based on developments in the situation, continue to review the relevant provisions of resolutions and make necessary adjustments in a timely fashion.

The international Conference on Somalia was held recently in London. The meeting discussed the establishment of security architecture, political process, economic recovery and humanitarian issues. The Chinese Government's Special Representative for African Affairs took part in the meeting and stated positions of the Chinese Government. As to outcome documents, the meeting adopted a security agreement and a new partnership agreement, which is something that China welcomes. China hopes that the relevant agreements will be faithfully implemented.

China has always supported the efforts in Somalia aimed at achieving peace and development and has taken active part in the peace process in the country. China has played a positive role in Somalia, with a view to finding political solutions for country's issues. China has provided a convoy fleet for deployment in the maritime areas around Somalia and the Gulf of Aden in order to help the country in its fight against pirates.

To help the Government of Somalia to deal with the current famine, China has provided food assistance to Somalia through the World Food Programme and has also provide emergency humanitarian material assistance in order to help improve the living conditions

of the internally displaced persons there. China is willing to play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and development in Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Deputy Special Representative Zenenga and Special Representative Madeira for their briefings.

Secretary-General Guterres used a phrase at the London Conference last week that we do not hear enough when we talk about Somalia: "good news". There is much work to be done and significant threats still loom, but there are hopeful signs in Somalia that a new foundation for the State is being laid.

Our charge today and in the coming months will be to continue the momentum of State-building. Our goal is to support an ambitious agenda of Somali-led reforms towards a democratic, stable and prosperous country. Ten years have passed since the Security Council first authorized the African Union Mission in Somalia. We salute those forces that have sacrificed so much to bring stability and security to the country. In addition, Somalia has a new leader in President Farmajo. Last week in London, United States Defense Secretary Mattis said that President Farmajo is someone who is

"willing to put personal comfort aside and carry the responsibilities and danger of leadership".

We congratulate President Farmajo on the security pact that was endorsed at the London Conference. That agreement is very much in the spirit of our goal to help Somalia create for itself a stable Government that can provide security for its people.

The Federal Government of Somalia took the first significant step towards that goal with the creation of the new national security architecture. A vital part of building a new, independent Somalia is the creation of a professional military and police force. This architecture provides a starting point for a stronger, more cohesive security force in a more united country. The London agreement will now support this security architecture with more coordinated international involvement.

Too often, the efforts of Somalia's international partners have been disjointed and even at cross purposes. In an environment where financial resources are shrinking, cooperation and transparency among donors are extremely important. The London agreement not only encourages international partners

to stay committed; it urges them to work together and more cooperatively.

The United States is fully committed to supporting the implementation of the national security architecture and the London communiqué. Our support comes with certain expectations, however. We welcome the new Somali Administration's commitment to tackling corruption in the security sector. We will be looking to see that the statements made promising these reforms are matched with swift and decisive actions to ensure transparency and accountability. We also need to see stronger institutional capacity within the Somali national army before we can consider lifting the arms embargo.

We are willing to help Somalia build that capacity. In the meantime, the Government of Somalia is able to obtain the military equipment it needs by following the existing exemption. Additionally, as we go through the African Union-United Nations joint review of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), we encourage the review team to take a hard look at how the international community can best support the next stage of State-building in Somalia. Our goal now is to begin the transition of Somali security forces by providing training and resources to Somali troops. AMISOM's comparative advantage is its ability to undertake offensive operations and perform counter-terrorism activities. Given the ongoing threats in Somalia from Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, we do not believe that it is appropriate at this time to consider a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia, nor do we support the use of United Nations assessed funding for AMISOM troop stipends.

Finally, as we focus on strengthening Somalia's political and security institutions, we cannot lose sight of the immense challenges posed by the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Over 6.5 million people are in need of food assistance in Somalia — more than half the population. We applaud the Government's efforts to address the drought conditions and we appreciate the mobilization efforts of the humanitarian community to provide water, food and medical care. While we are heartened by the commitment of over \$600 million from the international community this year, we recognize that we are not out of the woods yet, as our briefers have reminded us today.

Somalia and the United Nations have just requested nearly \$900 million to provide assistance through

the end of this year. The United States has provided \$178 million since October to the humanitarian response. We encourage other donors to offer their support as well. In the longer term, it will be Somalia's emergence as a stable, secure nation that will help it to prevent future humanitarian crises. This is a moment of great potential for that nation. The United States looks forward to remaining a partner to Somalia as Somalia makes its journey to security and Independence.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): First, I thank Mr. Zenenga and Ambassador Madeira for their informative updates on the situation in Somalia.

Japan highly commends the Governments of the United Kingdom and Somalia, as well as the United Nations, for hosting the London Conference on 11 May to chart a new course for peace and stability in Somalia. Japan was represented there by Mr. Shunsuke Takei, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

As articulated at the Conference, while Somalia has made steady progress towards peace and prosperity, many challenges lie ahead. With the sustained assistance of the international community, the Government must urgently address famine and food insecurity, develop a representative Somali national army and police force, review the Constitution and facilitate universal suffrage in 2020. In this regard, we are particularly encouraged by President Farmajo's robust commitment at the London Conference on Somalia to leading the Government in addressing these challenges.

While the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) remains critical to the security of Somalia, in the longer term Somali institutions must be capable of providing security in all corners of the country. Japan therefore looks forward to the steady implementation of the national security architecture by the Federal Government and federal member states. The newly created national security council will have an important role to play in an integrated approach to security. Additionally, international partners must depart from individualistic approaches and closely coordinate efforts to assist Somalia in developing a representative national army and police force.

Successful and lasting State-building for Somalia will also hinge on its economic development and the well-being of its citizens. To that end, Japan has contributed \$442 million to provide basic social services, strengthen the capacity of the Somali police forces and invigorate the national economy, including

the empowerment of young people, who play a role in the national development plan. Our assistance includes the recent disbursement of \$8.5 million to urgently address the famine crisis. We believe that the concerted action of the international community to prevent famine is crucial at this critical juncture. We have also supported the Somali people in capacity-building by providing training to more than 150 people in the areas of health, infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries and counter-terrorism.

Japan also looks forward to an inclusive and thorough constitutional review to build a federal State, including on resource and revenue-sharing mechanisms between the Federal Government and the states.

Lastly, the recent increase in hijacking of commercial vessels off the coast of Somalia is a matter of serious concern and highlights the need for sustained international counter-piracy efforts in the region. Japan will continue its warning and surveillance activities and escort operations, while also supporting social services and economic development in the coastal areas. Through these activities, Japan will continue to cooperate with the international community to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific Ocean.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (spoke in French): I thank the Mr. Zenenga and Mr. Madeira for their briefings. I shall not rehash their diagnosis and assessment of the current situation, which, as the Secretary-General said following his recent visit to Somalia, is a source of dual and contrasting feelings of sadness and hope.

Progress has been made in Somalia since 2007. The recent electoral process, despite its shortcomings, maintains and extends that momentum. With respect to the international security effort in Somalia, France, of course, pays tribute to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), its fallen soldiers and the support of the United Nations. France also recalls that the European Union has contributed nearly \$2 billion to this effort.

But we also know that this significant progress is partial and reversible. In that context, I would like to emphasize the following elements, which, in our view, constitute the priorities of the coming phase in Somalia.

First, on the political and humanitarian situation, France endorses the recommendations of the strategic review of the United Nations presence in Somalia, which, beyond the guidelines for the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Somalia, identifies priority areas for action, numbering four per month. This includes, first, the conclusion of an agreement on federalism defining the respective competences of the federal authorities and the federated entities in both civil and military fields. Secondly, basic public services must be established throughout the territory capable of providing the population with the services and protections it needs.

In this regard, the drought currently affecting the region requires urgent action and reminds us of the importance of putting in place the measures necessary to respond to the humanitarian consequences of crises, whatever they may be.

Thirdly, a greater effort is required in the establishment of the rule of law in Somalia and in the area of respect for human rights. These principles must be applied to all actors, be they national or international, in particular in the area of security. The United Nations policy on human rights must be our common framework in this respect.

Fourthly, we need greater transparency in public finances and in the management of international assistance.

The second priority in the upcoming period is AMISOM. In the context of our prioritization of United Nations action, following this year's elections our major priority is security. In this respect, France would like to make three points.

First, concerning the financing of AMISOM, France had hoped that other contributors would join in the financial efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the European Union and bilateral contributors. But the geographical diversification of AMISOM funding did not, unfortunately, take place; we cannot and should not stop here.

Secondly, on the issue of the withdrawal of AMISOM, we understand the desire of certain troop-contributing countries to withdraw and once again we pay tribute to them. However, such a withdrawal should not simply follow a national timetable but also must be linked to a Somali security solution.

Thirdly, before the withdrawal, AMISOM, which is going to continue its operations in Somalia, must increase its operational effectiveness. This requires the establishment of mission support units, improving intelligence-gathering capacities, strengthening the

chain of command, and coordination among the various contingents.

France expects that the joint review of AMISOM, as requested in resolution 2297 (2016) will take account of these challenges.

But the crucial point when it comes to security, as was underscored by the briefers and the speakers who took the floor before me, is a greater involvement of the Somalis themselves. This, we believe, is the key issue for the upcoming period. About 1,900 Somali army personnel are eligible for logistical support, to be provided by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, in the framework of joint operations with UNSOM. Also, local forces — also known as Darwish forces — are carrying out security functions. These forces must be involved to a greater extent and as quickly as possible in exercising control over the liberated territories.

The review requested in resolution 2297 (2016) places the development of a Somali solution at the heart of its objectives. A general, in-depth review of the staffing of the Somali armed forces must be carried out as soon as possible, and followed up by the establishment of a transparent system of salary payments. The European Union must also continue carrying out the training of its forces through the European Union Training Mission for Somalia, including in the regions, and we welcome the fact that the European Union was invited to participate in the joint mission.

In order for these goals to be attained, these goals must be shared by the Somali authorities, which must commit to working towards them. The concept of mutual accountability must be fleshed out operationally, and France welcomes the recent encouraging developments in this area.

Lastly, we welcome the London Conference, held last week, at which these undertakings were endorsed and international partners joined together on a coordinated approach that must be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): At the outset, let me thank Deputy State Representative Zenenga and Special Representative Madeira for their briefings.

We share the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/408) that in the past month we have witnessed remarkable events that have restored significant hope for the future of Somalia. It is crucial

for us to build on these results and move towards a different and more positive narrative of the situation in the country. We take today's opportunity to support President Farmajo and the Somali authorities' efforts in the institution-building process.

Italy is actively committed, together with Somalia itself, the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other relevant partners to the full empowerment of Somali institutions. We firmly believe that Somali ownership is key to this process. We have always adhered to this principle and will continue to do so.

Turning to security, we welcome the results of the London Conference of 11 May and the launch of the new partnership for Somalia, which will be vital to the implementation of the national development plan.

The threat posed by Al-Shabaab remains very serious, especially in terms of its impact on the population. This is where the work of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is still crucial to the success of the Somali security forces entry strategy.

Italy supports the efforts made by the United Nations and the African Union to lay out the framework for AMISOM operations and looks with confidence to the outcome of the joint review of the United Nations-African Union cooperation on AMISOM currently under way. We share the view expressed by Special Representative Madeira that this review must be conducted in very close consultation with the Somali authorities.

Italy will continue to support Somali ownership in the security sector via bilateral training for the Somali police and also by leading the European Union training mission in Somalia, to which we provide half of the force and the Force Commander.

Bearing in mind the central challenge posed by terrorism, it is also clear that the security dimension is not the only issue we must tackle. Somalia, together with its partners, can do more to tackle what are also the root causes of radicalization, such as poverty, lack of education, lack of job opportunities and the prevention of violent extremism.

As for the United Nations, in the coming months UNSOM should work to advance major efforts in consolidating the rule of law, financial accountability and administrative capacities, at both the national and federal levels, starting with basic social services.

As recalled in the Secretary-General's recent review of operations, the core mission of UNSOM remains strategic advice on peacebuilding and State-building, the coordination of international support and capacity-building of Somali federal and State institutions.

The humanitarian situation is very, very worrisome. Italy has so far committed \$4.5 million to the drought emergency, and will continue to do its part to alleviate suffering and strengthen resilience for the most vulnerable categories of the civilian population.

Lastly, we commend the Federal Government of Somalia for the priority given to rebuilding the economy and restoring key financial institutions. We warmly welcome the road map agreed between the Federal Government and international financial institutions, and we strongly encourage Somalia's aspirations towards debt relief, which will be the final goal of the implementation of both the road map and the conditions required by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. Italy reiterates its commitment to fulfilling this aspiration as soon as the relevant requirements are met.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the briefers for their comprehensive presentations.

The successful conclusion of an electoral cycle in Somalia, including the election of a new bicameral Parliament and a President, are an important milestone in the history of the country. We expect that the new authorities will very quickly focus their attention on ensuring that Somalia continues to move towards national reconciliation, restoring statehood, strengthening the security sector and socioeconomic development.

The first steps undertaken by the new President, namely, declaring a state of emergency and a 60-day amnesty for fighters who have laid down their weapons, make clear the dedication and commitment of the head of State.

We also welcome the signing, on April 17, as an outcome of negotiations among representatives of the states, of the agreement on the national security architecture. In line with the latter, the National Security Council was established, which has the potential of becoming a promising forum for developing collective decisions by the Somali authorities. We believe that that represents a movement in the right direction and

a significant contribution to strengthening national capacities in the area of security.

Against that background, we are still seriously concerned about the security situation in Somalia, as it remains far from stable. The main reason for that involves the relentless attacks by Al-Shabaab. We also note the increasing activity of that group outside the country. In particular, we note that members of Al-Shabaab coordinate their activities with other terrorist groups in the subregion, thereby undermining security in the Horn of Africa.

Another concern is the worsening return of the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the north-west area of the Indian Ocean. According to the most recent report (S/2017/408) of the Secretary-General, in March and April alone, pirates carried out five successful attacks. Such incidents had previously not been recorded since 2012.

It is obvious that the causes leading to the phenomenon of piracy in the region have not yet been eliminated. There is an obvious connection between it and the drastic deterioration of the socioeconomic situation in the country because of the effects of the drought, while the Somali factions concerned have maintained considerable potential. We therefore note that we need to continue coordinating international anti-piracy efforts, including through the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. We are in favour of maintaining that entity, which has shown its effectiveness. We intend to actively participate in the twentieth plenary session of the Contact Group, to be held in Mauritius in June.

In that context, we believe that it is very important to ensure that the steps undertaken by the international community aimed at improving the capacity of the Somali army and those of the peacekeeping forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) be coordinated. We believe that the review of AMISOM's mandate, which is currently being carried out jointly by the United Nations and the African Union, should lead to the further enhancement of the effectiveness of the work carried out by the African peacekeepers. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that the premature withdrawal of the Mission from the Somalia could lead to the collapse of the security situation in the country.

Our close attention needs to be focused on the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia that has been caused

by a combination of the catastrophic consequences of the drought and domestic instability. Millions of Somalis are on the brink of starvation. The forecasts for the near future are far from hopeful. The international community must provide humanitarian assistance to the country as soon as possible and provide its people with the basic necessities of water, food and medicine.

We attach great importance to the arms and coal embargo against Somalia. We note that those restrictions have proved to be a very effective tool for cutting off the channels fuelling extremist and terrorist forces. We call for further enhancing the effectiveness of restrictive measures. The practice of partially lifting arms embargoes on supplies to the Somali armed security forces has shown itself to be effective.

In the future, Russia intends to continue to take an active part in the development of concerted steps to resolve the crisis and provide assistance to Mogadishu. Our country regularly provides humanitarian assistance to the Federal Government, as well as to Somali refugees in neighbouring countries, through targeted contributions to the relevant funds within the United Nations system. We will also continue to provide free training to Somali civilian cadres.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking this morning's briefers, including Matthew Rycroft for his update on the London Conference on Somalia. I think that what we gather from the briefings and the report (S/2017/408) of the Secretary-General is that significant political progress had been made in Somalia during the reporting period. As everyone said, the political and security advances during the past recent months must be consolidated and built upon.

It is clear that continued international support for the Government and the people of Somalia will be necessary as they seek to build on the promise of recent gains and confront the remaining challenges. In that regard, we would like to extend our thanks to the Government of the United Kingdom for hosting and arranging the very successful Conference in London. We strongly welcome the outcome, not least of which was the security pact and the new partnership agreement concerning Somalia, which will guide our continued cooperation and support for the country. The important agreement between state and federal leaders on the architecture and accountability of Somali security forces was instrumental in making the security pact possible.

Important peace- and State-building tasks remain. Those include a resumed review of the Constitution based on inclusive, transparent and broad-based consultations, and preparations for national elections in 2020 and 2021. Building trust and constructive relations within and between the federal member states and central Government will be key. Strengthening the capacity of local governance and institutions must be a top priority with the aim of building confidence in the legitimacy of State functions, including through the provision of basic social services. The agreements reached last week will be of fundamental importance for our continued and increased cooperation in support of those efforts.

The United Nations has walked the difficult road of the past with the Somali people. Going forward, it will be essential that we configure United Nations support for Somalia appropriately as the outcome of the London Conference is implemented. Therefore, we welcome the strategic review of the United Nations presence in Somalia and look forward to engaging constructively with Council members on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The ongoing strategic review of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is equally important so as to ensure well-calibrated and well-coordinated support to Somalia. It is crucial that the projected drawdown of AMISOM be conditions-based and synchronized with a corresponding strengthening of Somali security forces. A failure to carefully manage that process could imperil the political and security gains already made. We should not forget that AMISOM has a critical role in counter-terrorism efforts in Somalia that have positive effects well beyond the borders of the country. Given its importance, we recognize that AMISOM deserves more predictable and sustainable financing to carry out its mission, and we look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on how to achieve that.

We are greatly concerned about the current drought conditions. As we heard this morning, the impact on the lives and livelihoods of Somalis is immense and devastating. While first and foremost a humanitarian issue, we must recognize that the drought could also have severe security and political implications. We commend the impressive efforts made thus far by the Government and the international community to respond, which have averted a more wide-spread

famine. But it is essential that we sustain the effort to the end of the year at the earliest. However, urgent humanitarian assistance needs to be coupled with efforts to build long-term resilience to droughts and other crises.

As Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, I would like to highlight the recommendations concerning Somalia adopted last month. It is important that they now be implemented, particularly the recommendation regarding UNSOM's child protection mandate on the need to allocate sufficient child-protection capacity to the Mission. We would also like to express particular concern with regard to the continued detention of children by federal and regional authorities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the detailed reporting on cross-cutting issues, including on women's empowerment and women and peace and security in the Secretary-General's report. We also commend UNSOM for having scaled up protection efforts in the light of increased incidents of sexual violence following the humanitarian emergency. We note that the Secretary-General's strategic review of UNSOM mentions that the women and peace and security agenda should be better integrated into UNSOM's mandate, thereby going beyond the protection of women and including their participation. The review's call for a strong emphasis on the good offices and conflict-resolution role of the Mission is also important. We look forward to discussing how that can be achieved in the updated mandate.

Despite the challenges still facing the Government and the people of Somalia, the significant progress made in the reporting period underlines the potential for Somalia to move forward towards peace and stability. The outcome of the London Conference shows that the international community remains committed, but we must all now redouble our efforts to implement the outcomes for the good of all Somalis.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank Mr. Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, and Ambassador Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), for their briefings.

I would like to begin by bringing up two important issues. The first is essentially about the thanks we owe

Ambassador Madeira for what he said towards the end of his statement, when he stressed how critical it is to ensure a coordinated effort in the support provided to Somalia's security sector. He talked about the fact that the deficit in that support has been a major problem. We hope that, post-London and post-April, we have established a basis for overcoming that problem.

The second issue is really an appeal for ensuring that the support provided to Somalia's security forces and AMISOM is judged according to objective reality and the contribution that those forces are making to regional and international peace and security. Sweden's advice is pertinent here.

Today's meeting is taking place against a backdrop of the positive momentum generated over the past couple of months for Somalia's peace, security and development. The outcome of the London Conference hosted last week by the United Kingdom, for which it should be commended, reflected that positive momentum, and the new partnership for Somalia endorsed at the Conference is consistent with the country's need and expectations for renewed international support based on its ownership and priorities, as outlined by the Federal Government in its national development plan. What is equally important, of course, is the need to honour the pledges and commitments that have been made previously and to translate them into concrete support for the country's recovery and peacebuilding endeavours.

However, we are also mindful of the fact that we are meeting at a time when Somalia is facing a serious humanitarian crisis brought on by drought. Responding urgently and swiftly to the crisis is first and foremost a matter of saving lives, but it also has to do with preserving the gains that have been made in recent years through enormous effort and sacrifice. In that regard, we appreciate the Federal Government's initiatives and plans to address this national disaster, and we welcome the international support that has been mobilized to deliver much-needed assistance to those affected by the drought. Ensuring an effective and coordinated response under the leadership of the Federal Government is important if a humanitarian catastrophe is to be averted, in the short term, and the root causes of the country's vulnerability to disasters addressed, with a view to building its resilience, over the long term.

Further complicating the humanitarian crisis is the situation of Somalian refugees and displaced

persons. The problem of finding a lasting solution to that issue was discussed at the Special Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development held in Nairobi two months ago. The Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, adopted at the Summit, represents an important framework for comprehensively addressing the refugee issue, but its implementation requires enhanced bilateral, regional and international support.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of AMISOM, which has contributed immensely to peace, security, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Somalia over the past decade. There are valuable lessons to be learned from the Mission's experience that are highly relevant and significant to current and future peace operations. AMISOM is clearly not meant to stay in Somalia forever, and it is only right that discussions of its future have already begun. That future should be based on a clear exit strategy and road map that can eventually give Somalia's security forces greater responsibility. In that regard, we welcome the political agreement reached on 16 April on integrating the regional and federal forces into a coherent national security architecture and on the establishment of a national security council and office, which will enable Somalia to gradually assume greater responsibility for its security.

However, there is certainly a need to ensure enhanced coordination and coherence in the international support to the country on the basis of its national security architecture. That has not been the case so far, which is why the progress made in building Somalia's security forces has been far from adequate. But that is changing, and the agreement on the national security architecture is a major breakthrough.

Although AMISOM will begin a gradual drawdown in late 2018, its role will still be significant, and the provision of logistical support to the building of Somalia's security forces and to AMISOM therefore continues to be very critical, and even more so in the light of the impending offensive operations in the Juba valley corridor designed to dislodge Al-Shabaab from the areas that it still controls. Parenthetically, in connection with the fact that Al-Shabaab continues to be a menace, I should mention that while the London Conference was under way, there was a major battle against Al-Shabaab in the Hiran region. We hope that the upcoming joint African Union-United Nations review will consider these issues and come up with

concrete recommendations, including on the issue of providing AMISOM with complementary, predictable and sustainable funding through United Nations-assessed contributions, within the framework of the enhanced partnership between the United Nations and the African Union.

Lastly, Somalia has indeed come a long way and, more than ever before, there are better prospects for peace, security and stability in the country, provided that the positive momentum generated in recent years can be maintained and sustained. The challenges that Somalia still faces are enormous, and a lot of work must be done. That is why Somalia needs the continued support and solidarity of the international community as it strives to overcome those challenges. I would like to conclude with some words of my Prime Minister from his remarks at the London Conference last week, when he said that

"[w]e in the region would continue to shed our blood, pay immense sacrifices and do whatever is just and necessary to restore the long-sought-after peace and tranquillity in Somalia and across the region. There is no greater contribution, no greater solidarity than this."

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to welcome the outcome of the London Conference on Somalia. The security pact and the new partnership agreement between the international community and Somalia should be seen as a genuine road map for donor countries in supporting Somalia's progress in a number of areas that the Federal Government has defined as priorities. We hope that their implementation will accelerate Somalia's progress towards lasting peace and prosperity by 2020. At a time when more than 6 million Somalis are in need of assistance owing to malnutrition and food insecurity, and with more than 1 million at risk of starvation, it is critical to scale up the humanitarian response to the ongoing drought.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the fact that Al-Shabaab continues to exploit the drought to promote its own objectives and restrict humanitarian access to those in need in areas under its control. Ukraine strongly condemns its recent attacks in Somalia, including the attack on 9 May on the Somali national army base in Goofgaduud district in Baidoa in which at least 13 people were killed. In that regard, improving security by reforming and strengthening the Somali security architecture, embracing both the army

and the police, is vital to preventing Somalia's relapse into open conflict and enabling its broader political and economic development.

Mindful of the gravity of the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, we would like to affirm our continued support to the joint efforts and cooperation between the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali national army in their campaign to fight terrorism. With respect to AMISOM's achievements in ensuring security, we support the conditions-based transition from AMISOM to Somali security forces, which should include the implementation of security-sector reforms, as set out in the security pact. We look forward to the recommendations of the United Nations-African Union review of AMISOM ahead of its mandate renewal in July this year.

The political process is another sector that requires the special attention and consolidated efforts by all actors in Somalia and the international community. Further progress in that area is essential to building up a more inclusive federal and democratic State. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's call on both the Federal Government and the Parliament to advance the constitutional review, which is critical to ensuring effective and clear power-sharing among political players, improving the interaction among federal member states and, equally important, achieving a one person, one vote system for the next elections. The strengthening of local governance should also be considered as a matter of high priority. Reconciliation and the establishment of an inclusive administration in Galmudug is a crucial part of that reform, as well as an important step on the path towards a successful conclusion of the country's electoral process. We therefore urge all parties to continue the dialogue aimed at achieving reconciliation, holding inclusive elections and establishing a broad-based administration in Galmudug state.

We commend the work done by AMISOM and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) in supporting peace and reconciliation, advancing the State-building process and promoting human rights in Somalia.

To conclude, let me touch upon the recommendations from the review of the United Nations presence in Somalia after the 2016 electoral process. We share the position of the Secretary-General that, in the next phase of the United Nations, the Organization should support

the Somali-led political and State-building process. In our view, UNSOM should be maintained and allowed to continue its work with a focus on strengthening, and building the capacity of, all Somali regional and local authorities.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting on Somalia. I also thank Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, and Mr. Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, whose excellent briefings have provided greater clarity in our work.

Today's briefings revealed that Somalia is at a crossroads and that additional national, regional and international efforts are required to meet the formidable challenges the country faces, such as terrorism, insurrection, violent extremism, natural disasters, drought and a humanitarian crisis. In addition, piracy continues to plague Somalia's coast, as the representative of the Russian Federation just recalled.

There is no need for us to reiterate the details. We would simply like to underscore that, despite the challenges, there is still hope, if we look at how far the country has come over the past few decades, even in difficult times. Hope was sparked with the recent election of both Houses of Parliament, and in particular of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, who, with courage, clarity and willingness, is patiently guiding his country towards reconstruction and national unity by building security and stability in the country. Some of his achievements include his efforts in finalizing the agreement on a new national security architecture at the federal and regional levels in order to develop well-trained defence and security forces who are accepted by the Somali people and accountable to them. That is why we believe that a political agreement of similar scope could be brokered in order to assist in establishing a functional Federal State, with a Government at the helm that paves the way for crucial one person, one vote general elections in 2020, with a high level of female representation in the various institutions, as well as the participation of the private sector and of the dynamic Somali diaspora.

There is also hope if we consider the excellent outcome of the London Conference. Our colleague

Mr. Rycroft just provided an update on the Conference and we congratulate his country on a successful meeting. The London Conference stands out because the international community once again pledged its commitment to continue to support the country. To translate that hope into specific steps on the ground, in particular to achieve sustainable development in the country, which must be anchored in reconciliation, security and lasting stability, the international community as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, must remain engaged by coordinating efforts and strengthening multi-faceted humanitarian, technical or other assistance to Somalia in all areas.

We welcome the fact that this process is being conducted with the participation of the Somali people — for, as Mr. Madeira mentioned, it is important that attention be paid to what the Somalis want, and not what we would like them to want. To that end, the joint African Union-United Nations review on the future of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the United Nations presence in the country is crucial. The Mission's exit strategy must go hand in hand with the subsequent capacity-building of the Somali security forces to prevent a vacuum from being created, as the threat remains potent.

We pay tribute to AMISOM and to the Somali defence and security forces for the outstanding work they continue to undertake with United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia teams in a difficult and often dangerous environment to assist and support their country in building the rule of law. However, despite the progress that has been made in countering terrorism, security and humanitarian challenges remain of concern because of Al-Shabaab's residual capacity and the gradual rise in influence of the Islamic State in the region.

Regrettably, in addition to the surge in violence against civilians that has been attributed to Al-Shabaab, children are used in the fighting, humanitarian workers are attacked and aid is diverted and its delivery hampered. Such practices must be condemned and, above all, eliminated. My delegation therefore welcomes the decision taken by the new Federal Government of Somalia to make security sector reform a national priority. That led to an agreement on a federal approach to security, which is the first step in rebuilding the country's security sector. In the same vein, a security pact that aims to lay the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous country was concluded at the

London Conference on Somalia, held on 11 May. The Senegalese delegation welcomes that as a major step forward for the Somali national army, which would shoulder greater responsibility following the future withdrawal of the Mission.

The humanitarian situation continues to worsen at an alarming rate, with the risk of famine and malnutrition. We therefore welcome the steps taken by the international community, which have allowed for a swift response to the situation and better access to food for thousands of people. However, much remains to be done. We encourage international and regional actors to continue to lend coordinated and coherent support to Somalia in order to build on the gains already made.

The fight against corruption, which is cracking down on many sectors of activity, and the improvement of the human rights situation in Somalia, in particular the protection of women and children, must remain a priority for the Somali authorities. In this regard, Senegal supports the zero-tolerance policy initiated by the Somali authorities with regard to the diversion of humanitarian assistance, which is committed to act resolutely against anyone who engages in such acts and practices.

After the success of the legislative and presidential elections, we can say that Somalia is on the right track. Nevertheless, many challenges remain, including addressing the drought, insecurity, the management of public finances, combatting corruption, the need to increase revenue and the need for institutional reforms. My country therefore encourages the international community to continue to support the Somali Federal Government in its efforts aimed at advancing these reforms.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan expresses its appreciation to the Uruguayan presidency for convening this meeting, as well as to our briefers, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zenenga and Special Representative Madeira for their comprehensive updates on the situation in Somalia. My delegation would like to make some observations and recommendations as follows.

As the Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, we welcome the successful process of building political institutions and outlining key priorities of the Government's agenda by the leadership of Somalia. However, terrorist organizations

continue to exercise their destructive activities. Therefore, it is vitally important to ensure coherent and coordinated support to the country in peacebuilding and nation-building efforts.

The 11 May London Conference on Somalia, co-organized by the Government of the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the African Union (AU), as well as the leadership of Somalia, was historic. We commend the security pact and the new partnership agreement that were reached as outcomes of the Conference. We recommend using its momentum to achieve progress on security sector reform, yet multilateral action to address the ongoing drought and humanitarian crisis is required. International partnership is vital to implementing the political road map for 2020 elections with the one person, one vote formula. We advise that this go in parallel with building State institutions, consolidating the Constitution and promoting inclusive political dialogue.

The progress made across the country would not have occurred without the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and particularly the bravery of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in combating the increasingly destructive acts of Al-Shabaab. At the same time, the AU report entitled "Ten-Year Lessons Learned Study on AMISOM", as well as the joint strategic review on Somalia and the joint AU-Somalia task force, will provide future directions for bringing about stability and effectiveness. We hope that the upcoming Operation Juba Valley Corridor II will significantly contribute to neutralizing the Al-Shabaab threat. We also suggest that we, as the United Nations system, collectively with the Federal Government and AU, should help to create a strong national security architecture with the needed reforms for the Somali national army and that the police force should assume greater responsibility from AMISOM during the transition.

We consider the security pact, adopted at the London Conference, to be a road map for strengthening the fight against Al-Shabaab militants. My delegation believes that this pact should be the next step towards implementing the April agreement between the Government of Somalia and federal subjects for its defence strategy. At this point of guarded optimism, the security-development nexus needs to be reinforced, so that Somalia's national development plan, with its

focus on economic recovery and stabilization, will be effectively implemented.

The humanitarian situation, caused by the ongoing drought, continues to concern us. We therefore wholeheartedly support the appeal of the Secretary-General for the sum of \$900 million needed for the provision of humanitarian aid. At the same time, we note with concern the rising insecurity in the various regional assemblies throughout the country. These should be addressed quickly so that they do not assume national proportions and the instability does not worsen the humanitarian situation and escalate the risk of famine. The active engagement of women and youth is particularly essential.

UNSON and the Government must work together with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to closely monitor and bring to a halt the human rights abuses against women and children. We encourage AMISOM to deploy and designate protection officers to provide training, capacity-building and advocacy.

Finally, Kazakhstan is ready to join this multilateral effort to bring lasting peace, with a new vision and aspiration, to Somalia.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Mr. Madeira, and the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSON), Mr. Zenenga.

We welcome the significant progress that Somalia has made in recent years with regard to the conclusion of the electoral process, leading to the presidential election on 8 February. We are happy to see that for the first time women and young people have greater representation in Parliament.

We underscore the importance of adhering to the political road map to ensure that, by 2020 at the latest, elections based on the one person, one vote principle will be held. We also welcome the decision of President Jubaland to cooperate with the Federal Government and to note that one of his priorities will be to combat the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. In that regard and despite the progress made in Somalia, there are still many challenges, one of which is the fight against terrorism, which remains a threat to the peace and security in the region, as well as the threat of piracy. The Al-Shabaab

terrorist group continues to restrict access to those who need help and assistance in the areas under its control.

With regard to international cooperation and political support for Somalia, we welcome the holding of the international London Conference on 11 May where partners committed to supporting the strengthening of national and international security, economic recovery and the preparation of a security pact. We also recognize the important contribution of regional partners, the African Union's participation, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in the transition towards a secure and stable Somalia. We support the position of the Secretary-General that international cooperation is fundamental to maintaining the recent political and security progress, in addition to ensuring consistent and long-term support to develop the institutional capacities of the Somali Government leading to the development of good governance initiatives led by the community.

We are deeply concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, due in large part to the worsening of the drought, which has spread beyond Puntland and Somaliland to southern areas, such as Gedo and Juba Hoose. United Nations data indicates that 6.2 million people are facing acute food insecurity and millions of people require urgent assistance to save their lives. According to the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 570,000 new displacements have been caused by the drought since November 2016. The ongoing lack of social security networks and basic services are also increasing the country's vulnerability and the possibility that the crisis could spread further. The international community must urgently respond to these challenges to prevent this serious situation from becoming a famine, such as what happened in 2011, during which, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 250,000 people died, more than half of whom were under five years old.

In conclusion, we would like to recognize the important work of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia. We consider them to be fundamental in building the Somali State, in particular with regard to the processes aimed at strengthening the State and preparing for an electoral process that is inclusive, free, impartial and transparent.

while respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Uruguay.

Uruguay thanks the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Raisedon Zenenga, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Head of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, for their comprehensive and detailed briefings.

Uruguay applauds the results of the London Conference on Somalia, held on 11 May, which resulted in a security pact and a new alliance for Somalia, in support of the Somalia national development plan, establishing an ambitious programme of Somali-led State reform, with the support of the international community over coming years. Uruguay considers it essential to maintain the forward momentum towards positive change in the reconciliation of Somalia. We reaffirm our support for its sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity, so that it can become a democratic, stable and prosperous Somalia.

However, there are many challenges ahead. The threat of piracy remains. Greater progress must be made in the areas of democratization, human rights and the rule of law. Corruption must be addressed, and efforts must be made to reduce poverty and boost economic recovery.

Despite the continued efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), AMISOM and the Somali security forces, Al-Shabaab remains a strong threat. As the Secretary-General indicates in his latest report (S/2017/408), Al-Shabaab has demonstrated the ability to resist and adapt, maintaining a united core despite internal disputes and rifts. Uruguay expresses particular concern for the group's readiness to use violence to hamper relief efforts directed at civilians and humanitarian workers, including the United Nations.

Uruguay believes that one of the main priorities is to strengthen the Somali national security forces and improve their capacity to work with AMISOM in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Somali security sector reform, as well as the reform of the campaign to defeat Al-Shabaab, are a matter of urgency, especially in the light of the AMISOM plan to start its transition

in Somalia in October 2018. Uruguay recognizes the contribution being made by AMISOM in Somalia, and highlights how important it is that the African Union continue to participate in the transition to a safe and stable Somalia.

My country also believes it is urgent to address the serious humanitarian situation in Somalia caused by the ongoing drought and risk of famine. That has been exacerbated by years of conflict and insecurity, and has the potential to derail political progress and the legitimacy of federal and State institutions. Coordinated efforts must be intensified to meet immediate needs and strengthen resilience in future.

Uruguay also believes it is essential to ensure forward movement in the constitutional review process and to conclude the establishment of the federal State, with the support of UNSOM. If well managed, the constitutional review process will promote national unity, address the root causes of conflict and instability, and offer a significant opportunity for the reconciliation of the Somali people. Uruguay emphasizes in particular the need to protect civilian populations, especially children, women and older persons, and encourages the Federal Government of Somalia to seek mediation and stability, especially in areas where access to supplies and humanitarian aid is vital.

Although all death sentences rendered against children in the State Puntland have been revoked, it is still very worrying that the death penalties have been commuted into lengthy prison terms. Uruguay urges the authorities of Puntland to comply with their commitments to revoke the penalties, facilitate the release of the children and to continue to work with the United Nations on their reintegration. Uruguay also requests the authorities of Puntland to revoke all death sentences against children rendered by civil and military tribunals and to, with the support of the United Nations, urgently develop a juvenile justice system in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as established by the Secretary-General in his latest report.

Uruguay is also alarmed by the cases of sexual violence, internally displaced women and girls, and members of minority clans, which are particularly vulnerable. It is essential to improve the legal framework, human-rights protection systems and the capacity and legitimacy of institutions to help combat impunity, improve accountability for human rights

violations and encourage reconciliation. Uruguay calls for the respect of the highest international human rights standards to address abuses and the excessive use of force against the civilian population.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Yusuf (Somalia): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak today. I am honoured to address the Council on behalf of the Federal Government of Somalia.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend your predecessor's leadership in guiding the work of the Council for the month of April.

The successful conclusion of the electoral process in Somalia on 8 February marked a change and a new direction for our country. Last week in London, we witnessed the commitment of many of our friends and partners to support this new direction, and we stand ready to carry out our part. President Farmajo has pledged to work tirelessly to improve security, to build democratic institutions and to improve the daily lives of Somali citizens. He has committed to spare no effort to fight Somalia's three major enemies: terrorism, corruption and poverty.

To deliver this ambitious agenda the President has appointed a capable and experienced Prime Minister, and an inclusive Cabinet that includes five female ministers — the largest in our history — and many young ministers representing 85 per cent of our population who are under the age of 40. Together with the Cabinet and the Parliament, the President has committed to getting the politics right so as to ensure that politics in Somalia are inclusive, participatory, vibrant and on a level playing field. In that regard, we are committed to solidifying our federal system of governance to pave the way for security apparatuses and focused State-institution building, and are championing the overall reform agenda.

We are a step closer to this objective through the recent historic formation of the new national security council, which includes all federal member states. The national security council is not only a platform for dialogue on security issues, but on broader matters of national importance. We are already engaged in

a dialogue on the sharing of natural and national resources. This and other areas will be discussed in the context of the constitutional review process.

Security remains an urgent question for Somalia. The historic new national security architecture and the security pact give us the tools to strengthen the Somali national army and introduce an improved policing model. The Council's ongoing support to our security objectives and UNSOM's coordinating role is invaluable to this process.

Today, our brave men and women in uniform, together with the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are locked in symmetrical battles with the terrorist group, Al-Shabaab. Without AMISOM forces, who are supplied with heavy weaponry, we would not have been able to counter Al-Shabaab's threat effectively.

The long-standing arms embargo on Somalia severely restricts our ability to procure heavy weapons, despite the partial lifting of the embargo in 2013. In that regard, we are ready to work with our partners and the Council to develop a clearly defined road map toward the full lifting of the arms embargo. This would include the improvements we must make to our weapons management, command and control systems. Somalia will continue to work to defeat Al-Shabaab in the next few years. Once we recover the remaining territories and secure supply routes, we will stabilize the country by building local administrations, in collaboration with the federal member states.

We are grateful to all our partners for their unwavering and sustained security-sector support over the years. Many provide financial support, while others provide technical and logistical support. In particular, Somalia dedicates special gratitude to AMISOM. Its peacekeepers have been working with us for 10 years, and during that time they have sacrificed many lives in the quest to help Somalia defeat Al-Shabaab and rebuild our security forces.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the desperate plight of the Somali Government and the Somali population in the face of the ongoing humanitarian crisis. According to United Nations specialized agencies, the crisis is deepening and an elevated risk of famine persists in some parts of Somalia today. Despite the unprecedented generosity of the past few months, we still urgently need sustained early donor contributions and commitment to saving

the lives of our most vulnerable children, women and elderly, who constitute 70 per cent of the victims of the drought. Moreover, Somalia needs support in its efforts in macroeconomic reform, which will give the country access to financing to support State-building and long-term development programmes. This is also critical to breaking the cycle of recurring humanitarian crises.

As my President said at the London Conference on Somalia, for too long the conventional wisdom has been that Somalia's State is failing. President Farmajo's

Administration is committed to seizing this opportunity to change that narrative and to nurture and deliver on a better, stronger and more prosperous Somalia. Despite the many challenges, none is insurmountable. We once again thank the Council for its long-standing support for peace, stability and development in Somalia. We are certain that we will only go forward towards progress and prosperity, as is the will of the Somali people and the priority of its Government.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.



Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7943rd meeting

Thursday, 18 May 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 28 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/379)

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17-14188 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 28 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/379)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/379, which contains a letter dated 28 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the fifty-first report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a privilege to be here today to brief the Security Council on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country in which the international community's commitment and unity remains crucial to achieving our shared goal, which is none other than sustainable peace and security in the Balkans.

(*spoke in English*)

These are special days for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it will celebrate on 22 May the twenty-fifth anniversary of its admission as a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations, along with Croatia

and Slovenia. But these days are also special for my home country, Austria, as it was presiding the Security Council in the month of May 1992, exactly 25 years ago. The Ambassador of Austria at that time, Mr. Peter Hohenfellner, as President of the Security Council, on 20 May 1992 (see S/PV.3079) proposed that the Council adopt a decision recommending to the General Assembly that Bosnia and Herzegovina be admitted to the United Nations. At the same meeting, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 755 (1992), endorsing that recommendation. Upon that historic recommendation, Bosnia and Herzegovina was admitted under General Assembly resolution 46/237, adopted without a vote, 25 years ago, on 22 May 1992, as a Member of the United Nations.

I wish to use this occasion to congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina wholeheartedly, and I am very glad that — as predicted 25 years ago — Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a significant contribution to the work of the Organization, most recently with its successful tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, as well as — and I stress this — with its peacekeeping forces worldwide.

As this is my first opportunity to do so, I would also like to take a moment to express my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Ambassador Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, who had such a dramatic impact on the work of the Council over many years. He was also involved in the talks on the former Yugoslavia as Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation.

When we speak of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we should also keep in mind what has happened over the past six months. I must say that Bosnia and Herzegovina has maintained its commitment to making progress along the path of Euro-Atlantic integration, while also continuing to face internal challenges to its sustainable stability and advancement.

On the positive side, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities formally received the European Union (EU) questionnaire in December, and the adaptation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU took place that same month. I wholeheartedly welcomed both developments and have consistently called upon the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities at all levels to maintain their focus on the EU agenda.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the EU, under the capable leadership of

its Special Representative Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, towards assisting the Bosnian authorities in achieving their aspirations to integration with the Union. Equally significant are the efforts of Enlargement Commissioner Hahn and of High Representative Federica Mogherini, who has invited the Balkan leaders to an important regional meeting in Brussels next week.

Equally encouraging was the consensus and forward-looking pragmatism demonstrated during the reporting period by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency in adopting the so-called defence review of military forces last November — an issue which had been outstanding for quite some time. This is one of the requirements for Bosnia and Herzegovina in its efforts to participate in the NATO membership action plan.

On the regional level, bilateral cooperation and overall reconciliation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia have continued to improve, in large part due to the committed engagement of Serbian Prime Minister and soon to be President Aleksandar Vučić, and also through the efforts of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers Chair Denis Zvizdić. Good cooperation between Sarajevo and Belgrade, and also between Sarajevo and Zagreb, has manifested itself through joint Government sessions and through the visit of Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković to Mostar.

Despite all these positive developments, Bosnia and Herzegovina has also seen some significant challenges over the past six months. First and foremost was the political controversy between Bosniak political representatives and Serb political parties over whether Bosnia and Herzegovina should submit a request for revision of the International Court of Justice 2007 Judgment in the genocide case of *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*. This issue split Bosniak and Serb parties and officials within the state-level coalition to an extent not seen for many years, delaying progress. Two different legal interpretations on whether the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency needed to renew the mandate of the Bosnian agent to the Court before submitting such a request proved to be irreconcilable, increasing tensions within the Presidency.

The now former agent of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the International Court of Justice, Sakib Softić submitted the request for revision to the Court, which later proved to be even more controversial when it

came to light that the Court had already notified him that a renomination of the agent by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities would be needed. The situation was ultimately resolved when the Court made its decision on the non-admissibility of the request, but the overall dynamic whereby leading politicians focus disproportionately on ethnically divisive issues, while showing little urgency in addressing the need for real reforms, is a serious cause for concern.

The second negative trend during the reporting period surrounded the activities of the Republika Srpska authorities to implement their unconstitutional referendum, including ostentatious celebrations of the 9 January holiday, with the participation of some Serb members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces.

In addition, during the reporting period, some Croat politicians intensified calls for the federalization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was understood by some to imply the further ethnic division of the country into three to four federal units, one of which would have a Croat majority.

Increasingly, the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina appear unable to act even in their own self-interest in a win-win situation, for instance in addressing the commitments made under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrangement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The continued failure to meet the IMF prior actions for the completion of the first quarterly review will hold back significant international assistance to the country's fiscal stability and economic development. In that regard, I would like to express my praise and support for Francisco Parodi, IMF Resident Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the ongoing efforts of the IMF to encourage meaningful structural reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, the situation with regard to rule of law in the country continues to deteriorate. Corruption is a serious problem, and continued challenges to state-level institutions, including the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to the further weakening of the rule of law.

Finally, during the past six months, the frequency and intensity of the Republika Srpska President's public remarks advocating for secession have lessened, although the independent status of Republika Srpska remains part of his party's official platform, and only

this week he publically expressed his certainty that such an independence referendum will eventually take place.

The lessening of such rhetoric follows the imposition of financial and travel sanctions against the Republika Srpska President by the United States. This reaffirms to me that we, as an international community, can have an impact when we are ready to send a strong message to authorities and leaders who openly reject the rule of law and reopen the wounds of the past that they are leading themselves and their constituencies into isolation.

In sharp contrast to divisive rhetoric are the efforts of high-school students in the historic city of Jajce, who, with their determination and perseverance, prevented the partition of their high school based on ethnic segregation, as planned by some political parties. Equally encouraging is today's news from Srebrenica, where Bosniaks and Serbs, Muslims and Orthodox students, are celebrating together their graduation from high school. They have stressed that we are all human beings and that, with their common festivities, they wish to demonstrate their mutual respect and desire for reconciliation. The students said that this is the latest and most realistic message out of Srebrenica. They have stressed unity, love and a common future. This is, of course, a good message.

Looking ahead, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have its next general election in the autumn of 2018. With the difficult period surrounding the International Court of Justice crisis and the celebration of Republika Srpska Day over, political discussions in Bosnia and Herzegovina will now most likely focus on amendments to the national election law. Thus far, no consensus has been reached on this issue, which has the potential to create a new political stalemate in the country.

Keeping in mind that some 18 months remain before the elections, I would strongly encourage the current authorities to make the most of the forthcoming period and demonstrate to voters that they are able to look past divisive issues and deliver meaningful reforms to improve the economic situation in the entities and throughout the country. Foremost on this list should be the economic reforms demanded by the country's international creditors, as well as EU-related issues, in order to open the early possibility of future EU candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also expect the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, foremost the parties represented in the

State Parliament, to finally resolve the legislative vacuum that has prevented citizens in Mostar from electing local representatives since 2012. That will require compromise on all sides and willingness to resolve issues pragmatically.

Finally, it is simply unfathomable that, more than seven years after the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the current electoral system discriminates against individuals that do not belong to one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's three constituent peoples, a considerable number of citizens are still denied the basic right to run for public office on the basis of ethnicity. The authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina must correct the discrimination identified in the *Sejdić-Finci* case and in related cases as a priority.

Six months ago (see S/PV.7803) I described two parallel trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina — positive advancement in Euro-Atlantic integration and a negative tendency to flout the rule of law and focus on divisive backward-looking issues. With the continued support of the international community, the elected representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina can make progress and ensure that the first trend becomes the dominant one, but they will need to refocus their attention.

In the meantime, the international community should retain all the instruments at hand. We need to be mindful of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex political and security environment where negative scenarios can quickly endanger the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the progress achieved after Dayton. For that reason, I am firmly convinced that there is still a need to maintain the EU military force on the ground with an executive military mandate, and I fully support its extension in November, when it is reviewed by the Security Council.

The European Union Force is a relatively inexpensive but necessary investment in peace and stability in the Balkans. In my view, it provides an essential baseline of physical and psychological security that supports the EU, my Office and other international organizations in our pursuit of our common goal of sustainable peace and prosperity for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people. Recent scenes witnessed in the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia remind us of how quickly an incident can escalate in the Balkan countries.

Despite the progress Bosnia and Herzegovina has made in the past two years in its pursuit of EU candidate-country status, the country still faces fundamental challenges. As we enter the third decade of peace implementation, it cannot be assumed that Bosnia and Herzegovina is on a glide path to a peaceful, viable State that is irreversibly on course towards European integration.

I thank the international community for their continued attention and commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is necessary, but insufficient to deliver the changes needed to bring Bosnians and Herzegovinians greater prosperity, stability and membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions. Only the leaders and institutions can do that. But we can — and in my view we must — continue to offer institutional support and a vision based on integration and functionality.

In addition we must be firm in upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while providing a framework of stability and respect for the Peace Agreement. In those things, our commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its wonderful and talented people remains unwavering.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank High Representative Inzko for his substantial report (S/2017/379, annex). Our delegation would like to refer to some key salient points and make some observations and recommendations.

Obviously, we see progress, but there are some areas that need close monitoring. The recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina must continue to receive attention. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a country in transition. It needs the support of all if it is to become a nation with strong State institutions with inclusive dialogue in its democratic procedures and trust in progress and normalization. We urge all parties to the Peace Agreement to comply with all procedures and institutions that are integral components of that settlement, including the Constitutional Court.

Kazakhstan reiterates its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in turn has demonstrated its

strong commitment to implementing its reform agenda — focused on security, stability, democracy and socioeconomic development. We welcome positive ongoing dialogue between the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia — with regular contact at very high levels — and we welcome the results of the meeting held in Belgrade in January. We encourage them to carry those results forward.

The European Union (EU) Force must also focus on converting defence properties into State and civilian structures, greater fiscal responsibility and sustainability, strengthening the Parliamentary Assembly and developing media and broadcasting communication. The country needs further support in order to improve its energy system and infrastructure, foreign trade, economic relations and other areas of socioeconomic development. The question of returning refugees and displaced persons and their resettlement must also be addressed. More needs to be done to improve the daily lives of the citizens and to promote reconciliation.

The progress achieved on the EU integration track will catalyse reconciliation and resolve long-standing issues while addressing the various reforms. It is equally important for the political leadership to demonstrate responsibility and accountability. The strong engagement of the international community is an obvious necessity for the sustainable development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and must include measures to improve housing, education and health care, and promote gender equality with the active involvement of civil society.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also needs international support to fight corruption, terrorism and organized crime. In that regard, Kazakhstan welcomes the initiatives aimed at combating violent extremist activities, including the training of Da'esh fighters, as well as the reintegration of such fighters into the community. A good example is the strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina on preventing and combating of terrorism for the 2015-2020 period. The strategy seeks to protect the rule of law, good governance and human rights, in order to maintain peace, security and stability in the region. Given its impact on European stability, that work should be followed closely by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the EU, the European Union Force and NATO.

Finally, the international community should support Bosnia and Herzegovina's move towards stability for inclusiveness in the political success of the country and fostering ethnic harmony in cooperation on national programmes. Ultimately, we must reach a stage of stability, while overseeing the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Peace Agreement, which will demonstrate a new level of peace and prosperity.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened very carefully to the briefing by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko. We also thoroughly reviewed his report (S/2017/379, annex) and must say once again, as was the case on other occasions, that the document does not provide an objective narrative of the country. It is a one-sided account with politicized assessments. We call upon Mr. Inzko to change his credo and to stop blaming the Bosnian Serbs — and recently Croats — for all the difficulties. Instead, he must focus on moving towards dialogue based on mutual respect that takes into account the needs and concerns of all.

In the course of recent months, the internal political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina deteriorated and culminated in a very deep constitutional crisis at the end of February. That resulted from the attempts of politicians in Sarajevo to carry out a review of the 2007 verdict of the International Court of Justice in the case *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*. We would like to underscore that these steps bypassed the Presidency as well as other pan-Bosnian structures, thereby undermining their efficiency and authority. This represents a very alarming trend in the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This is weakening the trend of having a mutually respectful dialogue, compromise and consensus among all constituent entities on all the important issues. Let us not forget that this principle forms the letter and the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. It is the basis and the foundation of national reconciliation, as well as a gauge and a guarantee of stability and security in the country and in the region as a whole.

In the meantime, the Dayton Agreement and its key basic principles are being attacked; this did not begin just recently. Let us recall the situation that prevailed in the summer of 2016, when the results of the census were announced and the well-founded objections of Bosnian Serbs were ignored. Let us also recall the trials and tribulations surrounding the ruling of the

Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina that it was unlawful to celebrate Republika Srpska Day on 9 January. This one-sided, politicized decision compelled the Bosnian Serb authorities to resort to the highest form of democracy: the free expression of the will of citizens. The recommendational nature of the results of the referendum was underscored in the recent Republic Srpska report to the Secretary-General.

As a result, the decision was made to introduce changes into the law on Republika Srpska's main holiday. This decision was not questioned. We did not agree with the statement that celebrating Republika Srpska Day had caused the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina or the Republika Srpska to deteriorate. This is not borne out by the facts, and there have been no negative consequences. The conclusions reached about the concerns of the Bosniaks who live in Republika Srpska, including refugees, are simply made up and have nothing to do with reality.

The situation in Republika Srpska can be characterized as stable and sustainable, including in Srebrenica, to which special attention is being paid by the international community. There is no justification, therefore, for the one-sided sanctions introduced last year by the former United States Administration against Republika Srpska. This decision needs to be rescinded.

Unfortunately, we cannot speak of stability and sustainability in connection with Bosnian institutions and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to the provocative attempt to review the decision of the International Court of Justice, it is also dangerous that a number of leaders are not ready to agree on key issues relating to equality for the representatives of all ethnicities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chronic issues are facing Mostar, where elections have not been held since 2008, and the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights ruling on *Sejdić and Finci*. In addition, the issue of introducing changes to the electoral law relating to legislative elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina is problematic. We are convinced, and let me underscore this point once again, that the electoral law must reflect the interests of all three constituent entities of the country, which is the basic philosophy of Dayton. The key to contemporary political issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the fact that the level of inter-ethnic trust is low, a trend to which we need to pay special attention, as does the

High Representative, because he represents the entire international community, not just a part of it.

We need to stop appointing guilty parties. Once again we need to work on promoting dialogue. We must stop telling untruthful stories about separatist tendencies in Banja Luka and inventing negative trends with respect to Republika Srpska. The President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, in his most recent report to the Secretary-General, countered all such accusations. It would be useful to cite excerpts from this official document in the report of the High Representative.

Given the current political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we see no danger to regional stability. However, the evolution of some processes following a negative scenario with the involvement of external forces, including extremist and terrorist forces, could make the situation into a source of concern. Unfortunately, the High Representative has paid minimal attention to the important topic of the spread of extremist religious teachings in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But this is something that exists, and the international community must monitor the situation very closely.

The quality and depth of the analysis contained in the High Representative's report leaves a lot to be desired. Once again, we see a biased attitude towards Serbs, as well as unacceptable comparisons and historic parallels, for which the High Representative will have to apologize later. Mr. Inzko spent more than a decade in the region, so he should not make those kinds of allegations. It is not entirely clear from the report how exactly the High Representative is helping in the implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the 5+2 agenda, on the drawdown of the Office of the High Representative. There has been no progress in that respect; the spectrum of preconditions and criteria is so wide that we cannot count on its implementation happening anytime soon. Instead, Mr. Inzko is very fond of promoting the Euro-Atlantic agenda. This is not his mandate. He is a representative of the entire international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the current conditions, we see no added value in the remaining elements of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support the closing of the Office of the High Representative drawing down his Bonn powers as quickly as possible, because they have outlived their usefulness, as have the protectorate

methods. They do not help national reconciliation but impede the harmonious development of the country as a whole.

Russia, as one of the guarantors of the Dayton Peace Agreement will continue firmly promoting the stabilization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, abiding very strictly by the Dayton Agreement. It is unacceptable to try to review its principles, which are enshrined in Security Council resolutions. We are committed to transferring full responsibility for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Bosnians themselves. All changes must come about as a result of a conscious choice by the Bosnian side and be carried out strictly in line with the consensus provided for in the Dayton agreement.

We are interested in the development of a mutually beneficial cooperation in Bosnia and its entities and ensuring that there is true equality for all three constituent entities in the country.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank High Representative Inzko for his update on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Office of the High Representative has played an essential role over 22 years to help Bosnia and Herzegovina move towards peace and prosperity and to secure the stability of the region as a whole.

I want to express our sincere thanks to High Representative Inzko for his tireless efforts and convey our strong support for his mandate as the final authority under the Dayton Agreement with regard to the interpretation of the civilian implementation of the peace agreement.

The United States remains dedicated to upholding the Dayton Peace Accords, maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promoting its continued development and integration. We commend Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards those goals and integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions. The completion of the defence review in November, continued progress towards NATO standards, the registration of defence properties and the work with European Union are all positive steps.

Continued progress towards integration with both NATO and the European Union, however, will require vision, political will and real follow-through on commitments, but, for Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve its full potential, it will have to resolve long-

standing political issues. Bosnia and Herzegovina must continue diligently to enhance the rule of law, address corruption and improve the overall political climate in the country for the benefit of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is particularly important to address reforms now before campaigning for the 2018 elections begins.

We share the concerns voiced by High Representative Inzko about the actions of anyone who seeks to erode state-level institutions whether by ignoring the decisions of the Constitutional Court and acting outside the established decision-making process or advocating for further divisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. United States sanctions against Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik should be a warning to those who seek to undermine the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States reiterates its strong support for ongoing efforts to make sure that Bosnia and Herzegovina fully implement the Dayton Peace Agreement. We anticipate the day when we can say with absolute confidence that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a peaceful, viable State irreversibly on course for European integration. We are not there yet, but look forward to Bosnia and Herzegovina meeting the objectives and conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders and all members of the international community to support the actions and reforms needed to reach that milestone. Until that time, the international community must deliver on its commitment to provide all necessary support and funding to the Office of the High Representative to fulfil its mandate and goals for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): Let me join others in welcoming back Mr. Inzko to the Security Council and thanking him for his report (S/2017/379, annex) and briefing. He has the United Kingdom's continued support in his role as High Representative. We are grateful for all the work that he does for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people.

Looking back over the reporting period, it is clear that 2017 was full of promise for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The path to accession to the European Union (EU) lay ahead — finally unblocked after years of inertia — and the reform agenda had begun to deliver the jobs and growth for which so many cried out when they took to the streets in 2014. Yet as the High

Representative's report makes clear, narrow interests, whether personal or political, have instead set back progress this year and dampened the prospects and potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On too many occasions this year, Bosnia's leaders returned to the divisions of the past instead of delivering for the future. Those setbacks have only served to distract attention away from much needed progress on the reform agenda embodying reforms that would promote greater security stability and prosperity across the country. We clearly saw that in the celebrations in the Republika Srpska on 9 January.

The referendum on the national debt was in clear defiance of the Bosnian Constitutional Court's authority and a direct challenge to the Dayton Peace Agreement. The participation of Serb members of the Bosnian armed forces raised tensions even further and underscored the urgent need to implement the defence review. Furthermore, the continued efforts of Bosnian Croat politicians to advocate for electoral reform this year have also distracted attention from the reform agenda and much needed socioeconomic reforms. We have seen economic legislation blocked and delayed because leaders have chosen to act in the interests of one of the constituent peoples and not in the interest of all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's people.

Finally, we have seen the Bosniak member of the Presidency undermine trust in the ruling coalition by unilaterally and unsuccessfully launching a revision of the legal case accusing Serbia of complicity in war-time genocide. That sort of backward-looking and divisive politicking has no place in 2017.

There is still time for Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to deliver this year. Through the reform agenda, they have a clear map charting the way ahead. It is a path that will lead to growth and stability, but one that needs renewed commitment and engagement. It is a path that remains central to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership — an aspiration shared by so many across the country. It remains, however, a path not yet taken, and that has not been without cost. More than \$75 million dollars of International Monetary Fund (IMF) funding was delayed late last week by the failure to adopt the law on excise duties. More than \$1 billion of further IMF funding now at risk.

As my Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, made clear during his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina last month, it is long past time for Bosnia and Herzegovina's

leaders to work together so as to deliver the reforms that would enable the country to compete and thrive in the modern global economy. During the past recent months, we have seen that they can find common ground. The successful repeat elections in Stolac show that the authorities can deliver for the people. But it is also clear that, until national interests trump narrow interests, stability in Bosnia will not be entrenched and all concerns about the political and security situation will remain, because continued divisive rhetoric and repeated political crises only put pressure on the country and distract from much needed reforms.

We therefore share the High Representative's assessment that the European Union-led peacekeeping force with an executive mandate remains vital. Accordingly, we will support the retention of that crucial asset when its mandate is up for renewal in November.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank the High Representative for his briefing and reiterate our support for his work.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made later on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to emphasize that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the European Union. The country has made significant steps forward during the past year, thereby demonstrating its ability to find unity of intent and capacity to embark upon difficult but necessary structural reforms. The reform agenda, which was developed with the assistance of the European Union and international financial institutions, has outlined the key areas of action to trigger development and consolidate the stability of the country. Nevertheless, the recent failure to adapt key legislative reforms required by the International Monetary Fund risks jeopardizing the results achieved.

We call on all institutions and political forces to stay committed to the reform process and maintain momentum towards the fulfilment of political and economic goals. Such reforms are needed, first and foremost by, the people. The political leadership will be held accountable based on the results that it delivers to its citizens.

I underscore that the reform agenda has paved the way for the country to present a formal request of accession to the European Union. We look forward to the finalization of the questionnaire of the European Commission and encourage the authorities to keep

this goal in focus and achieve it through efficient coordination of all institutional levels.

This is indeed a crucial time for Bosnia and Herzegovina. For that reason, we urge all institutions and political forces to refrain from raising issues that could divert attention from the reform agenda and the European track. Recent political tensions must be set aside. Any dispute should be addressed through frank and inclusive dialogue and by abiding fully with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in full respect for and cooperation with the institutions established therein, starting with the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We expect that the discussion on the Election Law will be addressed as much as possible in a consensual way, without endangering the institutional architecture, and with the aim of establishing a functional legal framework for the elections in autumn 2018. At the same time, it is important to consider how the need for institutional reform represents an important step that Bosnia will be called on to fully accomplish in the future in the perspective of the European integration path.

Ethnic divisions are still entrenched in Bosnian society. We call on all the authorities to tackle them and to focus on the many needs of the Bosnian people. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the youngest, do not need divisive rhetoric. They deserve concrete opportunities to build the future in their own country. They want to be recognized as enjoying the same rights and freedoms as all European citizens. From outside, we will continue to provide support along with the European Union.

Secondly, I would like to add that the regional dimension is of the utmost importance. Integration and cooperation among Western Balkan countries is key to their stabilization and development and conducive to their European path. It will strengthen mutual confidence, improve connectivity and freedom of movement, develop the private sector and encourage youth mobility. That is true especially for Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Chair of the Western Balkan process in 2017, Italy is engaged in a fruitful dialogue with all Western Balkan countries to identify with them their priorities to boost regional integration. Bosnia and Herzegovina is actively contributing, as it has already proved by hosting a regional summit last March in preparation of the annual Western Balkan summit that Italy will host in Trieste on 12 July. We are committed

to making this entire process meaningful and beneficial to these countries. In a few days, on 24 May, we will host another preparatory ministerial meeting in Rome.

In conclusion, our support to Bosnia and Herzegovina is driven by respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as enshrined in the Dayton Peace Agreement; our full support to the European Union-led peacekeeping force Althea, authorized by the Council; and our staunch commitment to accompanying the path Bosnia and Herzegovina has chosen towards the European Union. In that regard, we urge the country to redouble its efforts to take forward the 5+2 agenda established by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of High Representative and to steadily advance in approaching the European Union.

As the country's stability continues to strengthen and further progress is achieved on reforms and on the European Union path, we look forward to continuing, in the appropriate forum, the discussion with the international community on the possible reconfiguration of the international presence.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We, too, align ourselves with the statement to be made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union (EU).

I should like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Valentin Inzko, for his briefing this morning and for the work he and his team are doing on the ground. Mr Inzko is the seventh High Representative since the creation of the Office under the Dayton Accords 22 years ago. When Carl Bildt was appointed as the first High Representative in 1995, he said that

"the history of the conflict in Bosnia — as well as in all of the former Yugoslavia — is the history of the most flagrant violations of human rights we have seen in recent European history".

Despite the fact that challenges still remain, High Representative Inzko's briefing today underlines the remarkable progress that Bosnia and Herzegovina has made since then. This has happened thanks to the efforts and support of successive High Representatives and the international community, not least the European Union, which has remained committed to building an equitable, peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sweden has shared the road with Bosnia and Herzegovina on its journey. During the war, Sweden offered refuge to many Bosnian refugees. Some returned

after the war to rebuild their country, while others remained and have enriched our society, including on the football field. We have contributed personnel to the United Nations Protection Force, the Implementation Force, the Stabilization Force and, most recently, the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Althea.

Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallström recently visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she welcomed progress in the country's EU accession process and reiterated our firm support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's continued EU integration, while underlining the importance of dedicated implementation of the reform agenda, focusing on challenges regarding socioeconomic development, corruption, organized crime and fundamental freedoms. These reforms, including that of the Election Law, need to be pursued in an inclusive and transparent manner in order to be sustained. Minister Wallström urged Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to remain focused on their common goal of a better future for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, irrespective of party affiliation or ethnicity. While Bosnians will set the pace for their country's EU integration, Sweden will continue to assist, both politically and through our development cooperation.

Looking forward, there are three points that I would like to make.

First, we welcome the relatively calm and stable security situation, as reported by the High Representative. The recurrence of nationalistic rhetoric and incidences of ethnically motivated disputes is of concern, however, particularly in light of regional instability and the weak functionality of the Bosnia and Herzegovina state. All parties should do everything possible to avoid such rhetoric and actions, which undermine the reform process.

Secondly, the Dayton Accords provide a framework for peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The unity of the country is crucial to its further development. It is important that efforts towards continued reconciliation and an inclusive society be supported. In that regard, crimes committed during the war, including sexual and gender-based violence, should be addressed. Impunity threatens stability and social cohesion, making reconciliation more difficult.

Thirdly, as stability continues to be strengthened, there is a need for a discussion on the reconfiguration of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

including the phasing out of the executive mandate of EUFOR Althea, to ensure stronger national ownership and responsibility. For that reason, we welcome the strategic review of the mandate of EUFOR Althea this autumn, which will serve as an important basis for evaluation of the continued mandate for the mission.

Finally, as EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said in the Chamber only last week (see S/PV.7935), the countries of the Western Balkans, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, have made impressive steps forward towards peace, regional cooperation and economic growth. The European Union has been instrumental in these efforts by creating a European perspective. That is not in doubt. By continuing the path of reform, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina will take their place in a Union of over 500 million people committed to prosperity, peace, stability and equality for all its citizens.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I thank High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Inzko for his important briefing and assure him of Ukraine's full support for his activities. In the current circumstances of political instability and internal tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, his role and leadership have become even more important.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Despite the Council's efforts and calls on the competent authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to work actively to consolidate the results of the political process, engage in dialogue to settle their differences and comprehensively implement the Dayton Peace Agreement, the internal situation in that country remains tense, with a risk of further escalation. The need to overcome selfish interests and ethnic divisions and reach the necessary progress in the implementation of the 5+2 agenda is as pressing as ever before. In that regard, Ukraine condemns the decision of the Republika Srpska authorities to cease all communications and contact with the Office of the High Representatives, as well as their denial of access to official information and documents. I would like to underline that such actions violate the General Framework Agreement for Peace and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and are therefore unacceptable.

Unfortunately, existing differences in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not unique in the Balkans. Political tensions are becoming the new normal in the whole

region. Two days ago, the Council discussed Kosovo (see S/PV.7940). In the past few months we have witnessed tensions and even an attempted coup d'état in the Balkans. Those developments all demonstrate that the shift from a post-conflict to a pre-conflict environment in the region is, unfortunately, still possible.

Of course, the problems and challenges of each country are very different and sometimes incomparable but their roots are rather similar. Quite often, internal tensions are stoked by certain external players, who stir up instability in the Balkans to reverse European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region and to keep the Balkan States in the imagined sphere of influence. It is an irresponsible policy to conduct in a region that is as complex as the Balkans.

I recall the Council's discussion before and after the adoption of resolution 2315 (2016) in November 2016. Ukraine and many other Council members then strongly condemned the holding of a so-called referendum by the authorities of Republika Srpska, which was in clear contravention of the final and binding decisions of the Constitutional Court. Despite that condemnation and calls for restraint, as well as an annulment of the results of the so-called referendum by Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court, the Republika Srpska authorities continued their provocative actions, violating the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Such actions include the "Republika Srpska Day" celebrations, with the participation of the army's Third Infantry Regiment, the adoption of the law on "Republika Srpska Day", divisive rhetoric and threats of cessation, rejection of the authority of the High Representative and many others.

During the negotiations on resolution 2315 (2016), many Council members, including Ukraine, insisted on the inclusion of condemnation of the so-called referendum, as that would have sent a strong and clear signal to the authorities of the Republika Srpska. That did not happen due to opposition by the Russian Federation. Why was that? In the light of the recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the answer is obvious. The failure to take resolute consolidated steps against separatist actions by the leaders of the Republika Srpska challenges the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and may lead to the destabilization of the Balkans. It would thus punch another big hole in the infamous instability belt. Ukraine joins the High Representative's call and underscores that the entities

have no right to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the General Framework Agreement for Peace guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the constitutional position of the entities.

We are encouraged that, despite the negative developments, during the reporting period we also witnessed substantial progress by Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. In particular, I commend the adoption of the long overdue defence review and the signing of the protocol on the adoption of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. We also look forward to the EU Commission opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application and hope that it will attain the status of a candidate country in the near future.

Ukraine commends the European Union-led peacekeeping force Althea for its efforts to enable the security forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to operate in an independent manner and to participate in building a peaceful society. We look forward to a strategic review of the issue by the European Union.

It is important to continue efforts to implement the reform agenda, which includes socioeconomic issues, the rule of law and public administration reforms. Of equal significance is to demonstrate progress in the functioning of the judiciary, including through the implementation of the relevant Constitutional Court decisions and the fight against corruption, organized crime, radicalization and terrorism. Such progress is essential for the further stability and development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the whole region.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia takes note of the report (S/2017/379, annex) presented by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko.

Once again, Bolivia reaffirms its full support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We call upon all parties to support and implement the Dayton Peace Accords as the legal basis that could pave the way for stability and the peaceful settlement of differences between the parties, with a view to achieving lasting peace.

We also take note of the work of High Representative Inzko and we encourage him to continue his efforts in fulfilling his mandate, according to principles of transparency and impartiality, through an inclusive dialogue that takes into account the approaches and opinions of all actors involved, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Accords.

In that regard, Bolivia urges the parties to continue to work for the good of their country and the welfare of its constituent peoples, who control their own future and are fully sovereign in their decisions. We call on them to continue their joint efforts to foster dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in order to advance respect for human rights, cooperation and economic and social development. Similarly, we also encourage the parties to step up their efforts in the implementation of the 5+2 agenda, as a requirement for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Finally, given the complex situation in the region, we would like to urge the international community to pay attention to the concerns of all parties involved, with a neutral and equitable approach to avoid repeating errors of the past, while supporting and encouraging the development and well-being of this brotherly country.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina for his briefing.

France aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly on behalf of the European Union.

More than 20 years after the Dayton-Paris Agreement was signed, it continues to be the key to institutional stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The unanimous adoption in November last year of resolution 2315 (2016) served to underscore that all the members of the Security Council share the same cardinal principles with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also recalled the urgent need for everyone to abide by the principles and institutions set up by the Dayton-Paris Agreement and respect the desires of all of the country's stakeholders with regard to the European Union, as well expressing support for the presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Althea, which, for the time being, has an executive mandate.

The unity of the Council on that common basis conveys a message of peace to a region that remains fragile, as the past few months have shown. It reflects the fact that the international community agrees to

support the independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which cannot be called into question by any one of its entities, and to respect the choices made by the country, provided that they are in line with international law and the framework established by the peace agreements.

In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the various developments that in recent months have revived tensions among the communities and brought memories of past differences back to the fore. First, a referendum was organized in Republika Srpska on the issue of a national day. The vote was held in violation of two judgments of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose decisions are binding and final under both the Bosnian Constitution and the Peace Agreement. The question of respect for the rule of law is therefore a major issue. We also lament the tensions surrounding the recent filing of an appeal for review of the 2007 ruling of the International Court of Justice. Political leaders must act within the framework of national institutions and their respective functions. The International Court of Justice dismissed the appeal because it found that that had not been the case.

In general, we call for greater vigilance with regard to any initiative that is likely to create new divisions in the country. We once again urge all parties to cooperate with the institutions mentioned in the Peace Agreement, namely, the Bosnian Constitutional Court, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Office of the High Representative. We expect that the High Representative will focus his efforts on facilitating a peaceful daily dialogue among the different communities and entities.

It is more important than ever that the political leaders grasp the full extent of their responsibilities. The failure to adopt the necessary measures for the granting of International Monetary Fund assistance is a cause for concern in that regard. We therefore call on all stakeholders to abandon their divisive rhetoric and political games. The time has come to focus on the implementation of the economic and social reforms, which are the crux of the common aspirations of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of their community of origin.

However, despite that fragile situation, we remain convinced that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is moving towards normalization. Without calling into question the founding principles of the Dayton-Paris

Agreement, our objective for the upcoming years is to develop the international presence so that it is fully adapted to the realities of the day. In particular, consideration as to reconfiguring the Office of the High Representative must also continue.

France welcomes the fact that the European perspective is today the main engine for developing and strengthening the country. In that regard, we welcome the many positive developments in the past few months in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the areas of reform and European integration. The official handing over to the Bosnian authorities of the questionnaire to initiate the European Commission's consideration of Bosnia and Herzegovina's candidacy for European Union membership is certainly one such positive development. That is taking place in a context in which the prospect of European integration is receiving massive support on the part of the Bosnian population and enjoys unanimity among the institutions, from the Presidency to the cantons and the entities, which we welcome.

In that context, the European Union will continue now more than ever to help the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing reforms that fulfil the people's aspirations. The reform agenda is central in that respect. While much remains to be done, we are pleased that initial concrete results have already been achieved. As to the questionnaire, we attach particular importance to demonstrating that the European coordination mechanism is fully functional.

Lastly, as has been mentioned here, the European Union-led stabilization force Althea will also continue its activities and will adapt to the changing security situation on the ground in order to allow the Bosnian security forces to operate autonomously and to participate in consolidating a peaceful and forward-looking society. It will be the subject of a strategic review in autumn by the European Union, which will guide its work in the years to come.

Twenty-one years after the horror of the war and 25 years after the start of the conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina is moving in the right direction, with the support of the European Union and its other partners. The responsibility of the international community, and especially of the Council, is to encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina along this path so that it finally turns the page on the divisions of the past.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First, let me thank, Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative

for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the detailed report (S/2017/379, annex) he has just presented to us. We reaffirm our full support to him and invite all the parties to cooperate with him in good faith.

More than 20 years after the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, known as the Dayton-Paris Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues, despite its pitfalls, its progress towards reunification and building a nation.

Our statement today, like the one we delivered here in the Chamber six months ago (see S/PV.7803), is centred around the political, economic and institutional dimensions in Bosnia Herzegovina.

At the political level, progress has certainly been made with the adoption, in November 2016, of the defence review document for the country's integration into NATO, but also the agreement and official signing of the protocol on the adaptation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. However, we must recognize that the period covered by the report also saw a resurgence of tensions among Bosnian, Croat and Serb communities. It was marked in particular by nationalist rhetoric and a spiralling of activities — to the point that the Dayton Agreement, which put an end to a terrible war in the heart of Europe, now seems to be fragile, if not questioned. The country's nation-building requires an climate of serenity and open dialogue among all communities and entities of the State, in strict compliance with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution and the laws of the country, which are the guarantee for safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the period under review, even if the country could not fulfil its commitments within the time frame of the International Monetary Fund, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to benefit from the support and assistance provided by that financial institution, which we welcome. Similarly, the economic progress in the country, which we welcomed when we discussed the previous report (S/2016/911, annex), needs to be strengthened to promote harmonious development, the country's stability and the well-being of its people. We therefore call on the three ethnic groups to cooperate even more closely and to further develop the common will to live together in a stable, strong State that has a voice in the community of nations.

As is stated in the report of the High Representative, the presence in the country of the European Union's military mission, with an executive mandate, is still needed insofar as it enables his Office and other international community actors to carry out their respective mandates and to reassure citizens from all ethnic groups as to security in their daily lives.

Combating terrorism is one of the challenges that Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing now in a context in which the return of foreign fighters and complex migratory flows represent added risks to the security of the country and the region. It goes without saying that tangible results cannot be achieved in this struggle without strengthening cooperation at all levels among both State authorities and ethnic groups in the country. It is therefore important to effectively implement the 2015-2030 plan drawn up for that purpose.

Senegal calls upon the international community, in the context of the reform agenda, to continue to support the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to help it become more resilient in the face of the socioeconomic problems that it must nevertheless have to tackle. The same applies to strengthening the country's security forces so that they can overcome the strategic and operational gaps in an environment where the terrorist threat remains.

Finally, I would like to encourage the international community, first of all the Council, to maintain its commitment and current level of cooperation in addressing the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to safeguard the positive momentum the country has experienced in the more than two decades since the signing of the Dayton-Paris Accords.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Valentin Inzko for his briefing.

China respects the independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the choice of the Bosnian people in determining their country's future. We support the efforts of Bosnian people of all ethnicities to live harmoniously and seek common development. We welcome the effort of the country to promote national reconciliation and economic and social development and strengthen the rule of law. We note that the country is still faces challenges in its pursuit of national stability and social development. We hope that Bosnian people of all ethnicities will work actively to consolidate the

political and social progress achieved thus far, engage in dialogue to settle their differences, comprehensively implement the Dayton Peace Agreement and continue to strive for greater progress in all areas so that they may share in the peace dividend.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important country in the Balkans. Its stability and development, as well as harmonious coexistence among all ethnic groups, is in the interests of the international community in general, and of the States of the region in particular. The international community should pay attention to the views of all the parties concerned and take a balanced and prudent approach to the country's issues, while also heeding the concerns of all the parties concerned.

China welcomes the efforts by High Representative Inzko to promote the political process. We hope that, in accordance with his mandate, he will continue to play a constructive role in promoting the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also hope that the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to work with the relevant parties to play a positive role in maintaining security and stability in the country. China is ready to work with the international community as a whole and will continue to contribute to the achievement of lasting peace, stability and development in the country.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his comprehensive briefing on his latest report (S/2017/379, annex) concerning the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As this is the first time that we speak on the issue, we would like to affirm our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would also like to welcome the signing of the protocol on the adaptation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), which took place during the reporting period. We believe that progress demonstrates the country's commitment to the EU integration process and offers far-reaching, long-term and positive contributions to the stability and prosperity of the country and the region at large. We also take note of the continued exchange of visits by high-level officials and political leaders of the countries in the region, which, in our view, will strengthen good-

neighbourly relations and enhanced cooperation in the Western Balkans.

We are nevertheless concerned about some of the reported developments that undermine the political stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In particular, we take note of the continued deterioration of the rule of law, including actions that challenge the constitutional order and integrity of the State-level judiciary system in the country. In that regard, the authorities and political leaders should fully respect the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is our hope that the ruling issued by the Constitutional Court on the review of the country's election law will be implemented while taking into account the equality and interests of all constituents. It is important that all parties refrain from any provocative statements and actions that could undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Respecting the rule of law and the authority of State institutions, which are established under the Dayton Peace Agreement, is fundamental for the State-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hence, there is a need for all parties to demonstrate a serious political commitment to the matter.

We also take note of the political crisis and stalemate that occurred within the Presidency and Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina over the reporting period. We believe that such a paralysis in the normal functioning of State institutions serves the interests of no one. We therefore urge all parties to resolve their political differences amicably and to work constructively towards reconciliation and actions that safeguard the interests of their citizens.

In conclusion, we would like to express our full support to the High Representative and his Office in the discharge of the mandate and in monitoring the implementation of the civilian aspect of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We call upon parties to extend the necessary cooperation, which is vital to the work of the High Representative. We also recognize the vital role played by the EU military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR ALTHEA, in maintaining safety and stability in the country.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I thank the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Inzko, for his informative briefing. Japan appreciates the High

Representative's ongoing contributions to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Japan fully supports efforts by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to join NATO and the European Union (EU). Progress in such efforts is conducive to lasting peace and stability in the country and in the Western Balkans. We particularly welcome the application for EU membership in February last year and the adoption of the defence review by the Presidential Council last November. Japan strongly supports further efforts by the central Government as well as by the two entities.

Nevertheless, we are disappointed by ethnically divisive actions, even 22 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The leaders of every ethnic group must pursue the broader national interests, as opposed to more narrow concerns. The current political dysfunction at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the attempted request for a revision of the 2007 International Court of Justice' judgment is deeply regrettable.

Japan has provided support to reconciliation efforts among ethnic groups since the end of the conflict. In partnership with the private sector, Japan is conducting a project in Mostar for children of different ethnic backgrounds to learn sports together. Children are the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we very much hope that they will understand the critical importance of cooperation, irrespective of their ethnic origin, through soccer and other sports. An agricultural project has also been carried out in view of supporting reconciliation and economic self-reliance for citizens in Srebrenica, who have taken steps to live side by side in peace while overcoming difficulties. Moreover, Japan will also continue to assist with demining activities in order to ensure the safety of every citizen.

The international community should bolster reconciliation and efforts to reduce ethnic tensions. The Security Council must speak with one voice in urging dialogue among various ethnic groups. As a member of the Peace Implementation Council, Japan emphasizes neutrality towards different ethnic groups, and will contribute to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We fully support the efforts of Mr. Inzko and the Office of the High Representative to that end.

Mr. Kandeel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his very comprehensive briefing on his latest report (S/2017/379, annex) on the implementation of the Agreement. Egypt fully supports his efforts.

Egypt welcomes the positive developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular the improvement in good-neighbourly relations and efforts to join European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. That could help to consolidate security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will lead the country to reforms that will ensure complete integration with the rest of Europe. By way of example, we would mention last November's defence review, the European Commission questionnaire to be completed by various institutions in the country and the signing, last December, of the protocol on adapting the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

However, Egypt is concerned about the worsening of the political situation in the country, with increased political and religious polarization, as a result of the attempt to submit a request for revision of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 26 February 2007, as well as the activities of Republika Srpska authorities to celebrate "Republika Srpska Day", which contravenes a decision of the Constitutional Court. We would also like to express our concern about the deterioration of the rule of law and the non-respect of Court rulings by Republika Srpska authorities. Egypt believes that will damage the country's cohesion and stability.

Those events are taking place against the backdrop of progress on the five objectives and two conditions — the 5+2 plan — being delayed as a result of various challenges and secessionist calls on the part of certain political parties in the Serbian entity, which represents a danger for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and which could have repercussions not only for the country but also for the entire region. We call upon all political leaders to overcome their narrow political interests and advance the national interests of the people.

Finally, Egypt reaffirms that the Dayton Accords remain the framework for peace and the cornerstone for institutional stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also reaffirm the importance of respecting the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its stability, territorial integrity, its Constitution and all the rulings of its courts by all parties in order to build stability in the country.

Egypt calls on all factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina to address those challenges and underscores the importance of everyone working together to fully implement the 5+2 plan.

Egypt urges coexistence among all communities and religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only through serious efforts to embrace the concept of peaceful coexistence and political consensus will the country succeed in consolidating peace and speeding up the reform process, which must go hand in hand with genuine international and regional support for those efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Permanent Representative of Uruguay.

I thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his detailed briefing.

As we have indicated on previous occasions, Uruguay adheres to strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. In that spirit, we reaffirm once again our support for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Our country attaches the utmost importance to the rule of law and the authority of the institutions arising from the General Framework Agreement for Peace of 1995. Respect for them is part of the path towards stability and harmonious coexistence. We believe that the rulings of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be complied with in full. As a general rule, we also believe that politicians must act responsibly and constructively in order to achieve national objectives that benefit the entire country, such as economic development and the reforms needed for stabilization. Along those lines, the international community must continue to support the implementation of the 1995 Comprehensive Framework Agreement for Peace as a way to settle differences among the three communities.

The stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an asset, not just for the country but for the region as a whole. Equality of rights, duties and guarantees is a fundamental assumption of societies. Respect for each community and the harmonious integration of minorities, as well as their adequate representation, lead to a stable and positive political environment. We condemn ethnocentric discourse, divisive

and belligerent rhetoric and acts that offend other communities or the victims of war. We must continue to work to leave behind the bitterness that is the product of a conflict that was an affront to humankind and represented one of the darkest chapters in the history of the region and the world.

Bosnia and Herzegovina should focus on the goals shared by all communities. We note with interest the progress made towards the country's integration in the European Union and in improving its regional relations. In that context, the resolution of issues related to defence and State property, fiscal sustainability and the strengthening of the rule of law are of particular relevance. We also appreciate the work being carried out on the ground by the Office of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina and by Operation Althea of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which represents a guarantee for political and social stability in the country.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Uruguay's desire and commitment to ensuring that Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes stable and sovereign, with inclusion for all of its citizens and a focus on the common good.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on our assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. I wish you and your delegation every success.

We welcome the presence in the Council today of Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his report (S/2017/379, annex) on the situation in the country, which covers the period from 22 October 2016 to 21 April 2017.

Bosnia and Herzegovina further intensified its efforts during the reporting period in the implementation of the reform agenda and continued to work vigorously to implement the socioeconomic reforms necessary for integration into the European Union (EU). Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities at all levels have synchronized their activities as they prepare answers for the European Commission questionnaire.

In December 2016, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union signed the protocol on the adaptation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. The signing of the protocol represents an important step forward on Bosnia and Herzegovina's path towards joining the European Union. The protocol begins a new stage of trade cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU member States. In addition, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Denis Zvizdić, in his capacity as a Chair of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilization and Association Council, signed a decision on foreign trade that will simplify trade with the EU and the wider region. Specifically, the decision replaced bilateral rules of origin with preferential rules of origin, in accordance with the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin. We would like to express our appreciation to the European Union for its unwavering commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership in the EU. Bosnia and Herzegovina has also enhanced its cooperation with NATO.

One of the most important goals of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy is the advancement of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region. The perspective of integration into the European Union remains a crucial factor not only in regional cooperation but also in the stability of the Western Balkans. Cooperation within the framework of the Berlin process, which provides assets for traffic and energy infrastructure, is particularly important for regional development.

Countries of the Western Balkans continue to hold regular meetings at the highest level that generate a positive political environment. At the last meeting of Western Balkans Prime Ministers, held in Sarajevo on 16 and 17 March, the States' Prime Ministers expressed their full commitment to the prospect of EU accession and welcomed the European Council's unequivocal support in that regard. They stressed that firm and credible EU prospects continue to drive the transformation and modernization of the region through political and economic reforms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has intensified its efforts to strengthen the rule of law in several key areas. In the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to fulfil its international obligations with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism. Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with provisions of its

amended penal code, continues to prosecute terrorist fighters as well as those facilitating their recruitment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's judicial and security institutions have been implementing their strategy for preventing and combating terrorism. In addition to security measures, the strategy for preventive activities for de-radicalization carried out by national stakeholders, such as religious communities, educational institutions, civil society organizations and the media. In the same period, Bosnia and Herzegovina's rule of law and security institutions have made progress in combating organized crime, corruption and money-laundering.

As for prosecuting war crimes in domestic courts, we would like to reiterate that fighting impunity at the local level is vital for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex and multinational State. In that context, implementing the National War Crimes Strategy, regardless of the national or religious origin of perpetrators or victims, is essential to reconciliation and long-term stability.

With regard to the economic situation, I would stress that Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy, like other economies in the region, has been affected by the global economic slowdown. Nevertheless, its economy grew at a solid pace in 2016. In comparison to 2015, Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy has grown 2.8 per cent and its exports have increased by 3 per cent. The inflation rate was -1.1 per cent, which means that in 2016 consumer prices fell slightly by comparison with the previous year.

The international migrant crisis still constitutes a significant challenge to the States of the region and their economies. Since the closure of the Western Balkans route, we have witnessed a significant decrease in the refugee and migrant flow through our region. However, the States of the region continue to be on the forefront of the international migrant crisis. In that context, I note that Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have undertaken a set of comprehensive measures in the humanitarian, security and other spheres. Bosnia and Herzegovina has implemented its strategy on migration and asylum, through its plan of action for the 2016-2020 period. That document specifies our policy on migration and asylum, which is consistent with the highest European and international standards.

The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has remained peaceful and calm, as regularly reflected

in the reports of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Althea mission, as well as in the relevant Council resolutions. We stress that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a host country, has had respectable and fruitful cooperation with EUFOR Althea, particularly in capacity-building and the training of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is actively contributing to international peace and security by providing military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions, currently deploying 42 peacekeepers worldwide.

Finally, we would like to express the readiness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue their work in securing a better and prosperous future for its citizens. In that regard, we thank our international partners for supporting us on that path.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vale De Almeida: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 28 member States.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

I join others in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council and in assuring him of the European Union's continued support. I also welcome our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thank him for his statement.

(*spoke in French*)

The year 2016 was very good to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with progress towards reform and European integration. Bosnia and Herzegovina formally applied for accession to the European Union in February 2016. On 20 September of the same year, the Council instructed the European Commission to review that candidature.

At the request of the Council, Mr. Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, presented a questionnaire to the Sarajevo authorities on 9 December, 2016, to enable the Commission to deliver an opinion on the country's preparations. That questionnaire of 3,242 questions will provide a comprehensive overview of the

country's constitutional, political, economic and social landscape. It will also be a first test for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina of their ability to work together, throughout the country.

On the basis of the replies provided, the European Commission will present an assessment and recommendations to the EU Council concerning not only the candidate status of Bosnia and Herzegovina but also the accession negotiations. Those will include the priority areas on which Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to focus if it is to move forward towards European membership.

(*spoke in English*)

After years of stagnation, these positive developments are the result of the reform agenda for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2015-2018, which Governments of State and entity levels have crafted in the framework of the renewed approach of the EU integration process, and which since 2014 have prioritized social and economic reforms. The new EU approach has yielded results, but the implementation of the reforms has had limited success and the sociopolitical outlook remains uncertain. It is time for sincere reform efforts. Without them, an increase in radicalism, socioeconomic problems and nationalistic tensions could result in long-term instability.

Bosnia and Herzegovina initially made good progress, and the pace of reforms should not decrease. We therefore expect continued and effective implementation of this reform agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina has entered a phase in which it faces difficult decisions regarding the economy and public administration. Success in these reforms can bring significant benefits for citizens and help the country advance in the EU integration process. The much-improved economic growth in Bosnia and Herzegovina — more than 3 per cent in 2016 — and the growth in private-sector jobs are signs that, with the right policies, economic progress is within reach. Thus Bosnia and Herzegovina can make a positive contribution to regional cooperation, which is also an important factor in the country's EU path.

Despite these efforts at economic reform, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to suffer from agendas driven by constituency interests, which divert attention from much-needed reforms. Controversies are pulling Bosnia and Herzegovina in the wrong direction.

The judiciary should not be instrumentalized to justify the lack of a common vision. It is the responsibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political authorities not only to forge a country-wide agenda but also to comply with judicial decisions once they have been issued. The rulings of the Constitutional Court on the election law will have to be addressed in an appropriate manner by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities. Ensuring the smooth conduct of the general elections, scheduled for autumn 2018, is key.

But, as I said, 2017 should be used to focus on and resolve pending issues that present a challenge to the socioeconomic environment and democratic institutions.

I would also like to encourage the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward its European agenda and contribute to establishing a democratic and well-functioning society in which the equality of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs and all other citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina is ensured.

The EU reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. The European Union will continue to use all available instruments to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability and progress. The overall security situation has remained relatively calm and stable; however, security is not yet fully entrenched. In that context, the European Union confirms that Operation Althea of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its executive mandate, retains the capability to contribute to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities' deterrence capacity if the situation so requires, while focusing on capacity-building and training.

As the country's stability continues to strengthen and further progress is achieved in reforms and on the EU path, the European Union looks forward to continuing, in the appropriate forum, discussions with the international community on the possible reconfiguration of the international presence. In that regard, the European Union calls on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to pursue the reform agenda and to increase their efforts to meet the outstanding objectives and the conditions for the future closure of the Office of the High Representative.

(spoke in French)

To conclude, I should like to say that in the course of the two decades during which the Council has

been considering the situation in the country, we have witnessed progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina in many areas — socioeconomic progress as well as advances in the democratic and security areas. Reconciliation among its citizens requires, in turn, greater efforts for continued reform and for inclusivity.

I reiterate what I said yesterday: the doors of the European Union are open, and it is incumbent on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take the measures necessary to solidify this clear prospect and to join the European Union.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobniak (Croatia): Croatia aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

As a signatory to the Dayton Peace Agreement, Croatia bears special responsibility for the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia is Bosnia and Herzegovina's first European Union (EU) neighbour and trade partner. Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina are therefore one of Croatia's foreign-policy priorities and its integration into the European Union and NATO our strategic goal.

A stable, peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina where genuine institutional equality among the three constituent peoples and all citizens is guaranteed should play a valuable role as a generator of stability in south-eastern Europe as well as a contributor to the stability of the European Union as a whole.

The European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its consequent EU and NATO membership is a goal that Croatia will continue to staunchly support. We see this as the best catalyst for addressing outstanding internal issues as well as a safeguard for further democratization, the strengthening of institutions, and ensuring freedom of the media and an independent judiciary. The implementation of the reform agenda is also vital to achieving this goal.

We have supported the application of Bosnia and Herzegovina for membership in the European Union. We want to encourage the authorities at all levels of Government to redouble their efforts to submit credible, well-prepared answers to the European Commission's questionnaire, so that we can discuss the candidate

status for Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as possible. We would like to see Bosnia and Herzegovina catch up with its neighbours in the field of the European integration, and in pursuit of this pivotal goal we shall continue to extend our political, technical and expert support.

In addition, Croatia would like to stimulate greater cross-border cooperation on the part of local and regional self-government units on both sides of the border, which should result in the implementation of joint projects and better use of EU funds. Flexible cross-border cooperation and tangible benefits from EU funds enable people at the local level to feel closer to the EU.

On the Euro-Atlantic front, Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved concrete results, namely, the adoption of the defence review and a solid record in the registration of defence property, making the activation of the NATO membership action plan plausible and justified.

While progress has been achieved in a number of fields, including the economy, political crises, often repetitive in nature and substance, continue to plague the political landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has a negative impact on reform-oriented processes and is preventing Bosnia and Herzegovina from moving forward and unleashing all of its potential. The political impasse and divisive rhetoric pose the risk of derailing Bosnia and Herzegovina from the path of much-needed reforms and undermining the very functionality and stability of the country.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned at the fact that political polarization, intensified by years of economic hardship, is increasing radicalization and extremism within Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially among the younger population. This deterioration fits within the wider context of the challenges facing south-eastern Europe. In that context, we have to put all the tools at our disposal to good use.

Besides socioeconomic reforms and the implementation of the reform agenda, it is of the utmost importance not to lose sight of the political issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As shown by the recent institutional crisis caused by the application for revision of the judgment in the genocide case against Serbia, focus must be maintained, as well, on urgent political questions so as to achieve stability and prevent future internal destabilization.

The most urgent political question is the reform of the Election Law, especially in the light of the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina dated 1 December 2016 and the decision of the Constitutional Court on the city of Mostar. The former decision states that certain provisions of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina are in contravention to the Bosnian Constitution, since they breach the constitutional principle of the equality of the three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs — and their right to legitimate representation.

The reform of the Election Law therefore presents a welcome opportunity to ensure the institutional equality of the three peoples and all citizens, and a chance to leap forward towards political stability and a more integrated country. The refusal to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court on the reform of the Election Law further jeopardizes the fragile stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby leaving open the space for further political manipulations, which have, as witnessed in the recent past, a destructive impact on the equality of the smallest in number of the three constituent peoples.

Politically dominant actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to reject the implementation of the aforementioned decision of the Constitutional Court, thereby demonstrating their determination and persistence in opposing the realization of the constitutional principle of the equality of the three constituent peoples. We recall that the enjoyment of rights emanating from that principle represents the very foundation on which Bosnia and Herzegovina is built as a State and therefore should be seen as *conditio sine qua non*.

In accordance with its responsibilities and obligations as a signatory to the Dayton Agreement and as a country that shares a 1,000-kilometre land border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia cannot remain silent and inert while witnessing the continuation of such destabilizing policies. We urge all who are genuinely interested in the democratic stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take action on the prolongation of a situation in which decisions of the central judicial body are not obeyed or implemented.

The question of institutional stability is crucial to the capability of Bosnia and Herzegovina to efficiently and promptly fulfil its obligations arising from the process of European integration and to fight political

radicalism and elements of religious extremism. Croatia is ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in improving its institutional and administrative capacity and in meeting the requirements on the path to the integration in the EU. Furthermore, we encourage our neighbour to proceed without delay with the reform of the judiciary in order to strengthen its independence, professionalism, accountability and impartiality. It is also important that Bosnia and Herzegovina assume ownership of its judiciary institutions. The implementation of all outlined and much-needed reforms will strengthen the country from within and give impetus to everybody in Bosnia and Herzegovina — all constituent peoples and all citizens — to move forward on the European and Euro-Atlantic path.

Let me finish by quoting from the recent joint statement of the Justice and Peace Commissions (*Justitia et Pax*) of the Bishops Conferences and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, which took place earlier this month:

“Today the Catholics in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most endangered part of the Catholic Church on the entire European continent”.

The Commissions appealed to the international community to extend more efficient assistance to the country as to ensure that genuine and real equality of the three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs — and all other citizens is achieved in the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a supporter and advocate of Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability, prosperity and territorial integrity, Croatia echoes this appeal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Before I begin, I would like to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

In all our statements in the Security Council on this topic, regional stability and the development of all-round cooperation with Serbia's closest neighbours have been accentuated as its most important foreign policy priorities. These issues, we believe, should continue to be the fulcrum of attention of the countries of the Western Balkans and South-East Europe as they plan their activities and take concrete actions. In that context and to those ends, my country sees Bosnia and Herzegovina as a key partner.

The European Union is facing many challenges and its enlargement may not be at the forefront of its ongoing endeavours. Yet the continuation of the process of enlargement and the region's steady progress towards reforms are needed by the countries of the Western Balkans, perhaps more than ever before. We therefore look forward to each and every step made by Bosnia and Herzegovina in that direction as it brings us closer to our common European future. As a candidate country, Serbia considers that the European integration by Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important process and is ready to render its unyielding help and all-round support.

Strengthening comprehensive regional cooperation in the Western Balkans is an indispensable part of it: European integration. We are convinced that ample possibilities exist for cooperation between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and stand ready and willing to step up our efforts in promoting the all-important task of furthering such cooperation. In order to do so, it is necessary that our two countries undertake realizing our common interests as that provides the most solid and reliable basis for a better future of the citizens of both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Commitments to promoting stability and all-round cooperation and avowed readiness to undertake reforms conducive to the process of European integration feature prominently on the political agendas of the Governments of our region. Yet we have borne witness to various recent trends that cause unnecessary political tensions and send messages reminiscent of the troublesome past, while a constructive approach has often been pushed aside. They have marked the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the relations between its entities and constituent peoples and, by extension, the situation in the region.

My country firmly believes that its active policy of promoting reconciliation in the Western Balkans and strengthening good-neighbourly relations is rightful and correct. We must continue to promote political, legal and economic reforms, strengthen the rule of law and institutions, and pledge allegiance to European values as the only avenue to a more prosperous and stable region.

I also emphasize on this occasion that respect for territorial integrity is an international standard and a principle that must always be honoured and upheld. The past of the Western Balkans makes it imperative

for us to accept the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as the basis of a different and better future. In accordance with the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement, therefore, Serbia has been consistently and lastingly committed to the maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Dayton Peace Agreement was signed more than 20 years ago in order to bring an end to the tragic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As its guarantor, Serbia considers that the Agreement continues to be a condition sine qua non for peace and stability. Since we are called on to safeguard peace and stability, we must therefore keep the Agreement. Genuine reconciliation is needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all the more so as differing views and other challenges are becoming increasingly evident in the region.

Over the past two decades, it has been said and demonstrated many times that dialogue and agreements are the best and safest ways to address the outstanding issues affecting relations between the country's entities and constituent peoples. We believe that is the only way that we can ensure that potential solutions are acceptable and implementable as they help to build confidence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia considers outstanding issues — such as the observance of Republika Srpska Day, the functioning of shared institutions, election laws and others that are the focus of differences between the entities — to be internal questions for the country.

We therefore support an active dialogue within Bosnia and Herzegovina as the right way to find solutions acceptable to all and to build confidence. It will help strengthen cooperation, transparency and effectiveness in the shared institutions, promote confidence between the entities and have a positive influence on the situation in the region. Without it, there may be efforts to resort to unilateral acts, such as the attempt to institute legally unfounded proceedings aimed at revising the judgment of the International Court of Justice in the case concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)*. The Court's rejection of the request confirms the need for conducting political dialogue aimed at addressing disagreements and solving outstanding issues to the benefit of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia has given special attention to continuing and intensifying its political dialogue with Bosnia and

Herzegovina, which we see as one of the most important elements promoting general good relations. In that context, I should point out that Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, has visited Bosnia and Herzegovina this year on two occasions, in March and April. He took part in a meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Western Balkans on 16 March, convened to help prepare for the Western Balkans Summit, to be held within the Berlin process initiative in Trieste in July. In Sarajevo, the Prime Minister emphasized once again the importance of regional stability, strengthening economic cooperation, free trade and interlinkages, and the European prospects of the Western Balkans. On 3 and 4 April Mr. Vučić also visited Mostar for the opening of the twentieth International Economic Fair, where he met with high representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and discussed regional stability, promoting cooperation and realizing regional projects.

On 10 April, Ms. Zorana Mihajlović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Civil Engineering, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia, visited Srebrenica, where she commissioned the construction of a kindergarten financed by a donation from the Serbian Government. The children of Srebrenica, Bosniak and Serb alike — the town's future — will attend the kindergarten together. Mr. Denis Zvizdić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited Belgrade on 21 January. In his discussions with Serbian Government officials, the two countries recommitted to promoting peace and stability and furthering cooperation, including on joint infrastructure projects connecting the two countries, such as new bridges, highways and railways. On 13 May, Mr. Igor Crnadak, Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the representative of a partner country, visited Serbia to open the eighty-fourth Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad, alongside Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Serbia continues to be interested in promoting economic cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Trade between the two countries is growing, with a 5.8 per cent increase in 2016 over the previous year. Serbia's total investment of €900 million in Bosnia and Herzegovina makes it one of its biggest investors. We believe that the creation of ties between our peoples and economies should be a priority for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, just as they are for the other

countries of the Western Balkans, especially in the areas of infrastructure, energy, tourism, free trade and elsewhere. We simply must continue to promote projects that bring us together. We trust and believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina and our other neighbours are ready

to embark on joint and responsible efforts to achieve all our goals, creating a better future and avoiding the pitfalls of the past.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.



Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7944th meeting

Monday, 22 May 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. De Mistura is joining us via video-teleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: When I briefed the Security Council in April (see S/PV.7921), we saw two paths ahead — either international and internal escalation and deeper intra-Syrian conflict, or international dialogue, cooperation on de-escalating tensions and moving forward on the political track, even if only in small steps. So far, there are signs that together, we have chosen the latter course. Our common job now is to turn that into something more meaningful, both on the ground and on the political track.

In the beginning of May, I attended the high-level Astana meeting to stress that any attempt to de-escalate violence is what the Syrians want and is indeed vital, in and of itself, and can support Geneva, just as Geneva mutually supports Astana. In Astana, my team provided technical support to ceasefire guarantors — Russia, Turkey and Iran — and I was active in political consultations with all of them and with the Syrian parties. Jordan and the United States were represented as observers.

In my modest opinion, Astana produced a promising step — a memorandum between the three guarantors on the creation of de-escalation zones. The reports I have received so far indicate a significant drop in violence, including in aerial bombing in most of the areas identified by the memorandum. United Nations contacts on the ground have described tangible change, clear skies and areas quickly coming back to life. That is typical of the Syrian reality. Whenever there is a moment of peace or at least a halt in the fighting,

they take their future and their present into their own hands. Markets have started functioning anew in those locations. We welcome this, and the efforts of the Astana guarantors should be praised because we want them to succeed. I thank the Kazakh Government for ably hosting the Astana meeting. That is the good news.

There is also not-so-good news. Despite the nationwide ceasefire that was announced last December and the de-escalation zones now being created to deepen that effort, we have received reports of ongoing hostilities and even bombardment between the Government and armed opposition groups in areas such as Hama, Homs and Damascus. Some of these areas appear to be outside of the current de-escalation zones. However, as Council members know, their precise areas and ambit will become clear only when the guarantors complete the extremely important so-called mapping process. These clashes resulted in another evacuation of armed opposition fighters and civilians from areas of eastern Damascus city, which are called Barzeh and Al-Qaboun. Separately, following the memorandum, we saw some Government attacks on armed opposition groups that are otherwise engaged in fighting Da'esh in the desert near Homs and Al-Suwaydah.

While we have registered that the Government of Syria has made some significant advances against Da'esh, we also note with great concern the continued activities of Security Council-listed terrorist groups. We condemn in particular the attack last week by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on civilians in rural Salamiya, a very important and small community that has been there for hundreds of years, and the ISIL assault on Deir ez-Zor city, which is still ongoing today. These incidents show that, despite losing further territory this month, ISIL/Da'esh still has the capacity to cause great harm.

We are also aware of the reports that the anti-ISIL coalition has carried out strikes on an armed convoy, which allegedly was composed of forces of the Syrian Government and its allies in the desert east of Homs. I am also encouraged by the recent Government of Syria's agreements with armed opposition groups, which are resulting in the release of some detainees and abducted people.

All these facts remind us that there are still important details to clarify to ensure the full implementation of the Astana memorandum by all parties. We should therefore urge together the ceasefire guarantors to

address those details quickly, diligently and fairly within the time frame they themselves stipulated in the memorandum. All relevant international actors, specifically regional ones and the co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group, have a particular interest in this regard.

The United Nations remains ready to provide its technical expertise. Our goal is not just de-escalation but — at least on the military side — the realization of the nationwide ceasefire. Therefore, in order to make sure that the memorandum can be implemented fully, we have a common interest in ensuring that no party to the conflict takes advantage of any ambiguity on the ground or in the memorandum.

We urge all the parties, the Astana guarantors and those who have an influence on the parties to take steps to ensure rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the more than 4.5 million people in need in areas that are hard to reach and besieged. When there is a reduction of violence, that should be the first consequence — the first secondary positive effect. We have not seen enough of that. The United Nations stands ready to respond to any opportunity for increased humanitarian access based on the needs of the people and in line with international humanitarian law.

Finally, regarding Astana, we were encouraged to note that the guarantors seriously engaged in discussions on two additional subjects of importance to us and to the Syrians: detainees, abductees and missing people, and humanitarian demining. Indeed, on detainees, they finalized at the technical level an agreement on a process for addressing the issue in which the United Nations would be closely involved, and we are ready and willing to be so. I have therefore urged the Astana guarantors in writing to formally confirm that technical agreement as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the United Nations Mine Action Service, which is based in New York and was part of the United Nations team in Astana, is ready to do its part to advance an effective approach to humanitarian demining in Syria.

In the immediate aftermath of Astana, I invited the parties to the intra-Syrian talks to a sixth round in Geneva. They all came and met in a proximity format. The round was kept brief so as to proceed in a focused manner. It lasted four intense days, including one case of night/evening discussions. In the previous round, the parties had already begun to engage in substance across all four baskets of the agenda that the Security

Council approved after the fourth round. They also had, in the previous case, showed that the process is now facing fewer obstacles related to possible walk-outs, procedural objections or long statements attacking each other or even questioning the other side's legitimacy. We strongly insisted on that, and we got it.

I do not deny that there are, of course, still major gaps between the parties, but we have also seen a deepening of the process across the baskets and a greater understanding of what is required if the parties are to succeed in negotiating a framework for a transitional political agreement that safeguards the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and independence of Syria, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), adopted by all Council members.

I assessed that the parties needed to be ready to roll up their sleeves. We had only four days and needed to make good use of them to go even deeper. Specifically, I saw an opportunity and a need to increase focus and work on the constitutional and legal dimensions of the talks as the talks proceed. Everything is touched by that; every question that comes up has either a constitutional or a legal aspect. Why not go in deeper? Why not prepare in advance of that? I think we can all agree that no stakeholder — be it Syrian, regional or international — will accept any constitutional, legal or institutional vacuum in Syria before, during or after any negotiated transitional political process. I believe that on that, at least, we all agreed. Most importantly, the process needed and needs to be owned by the Syrians. They are the ones who should be drafting their own constitution, but we can help in preparing the ground for it.

Therefore, to that end, I informed the parties that I intended to establish a technical consultative process to move forward and examine in greater depth the relevant constitutional and legal issues raised within the formal sessions. The sessions remain formal, but can we not go a little bit deeper, especially when the subject may have common ground? Can we not prepare better for the time when there will be a peace conference and many of those issues could be at least more or less, if not sorted out, at least prepared?

I therefore shared initial ideas with the participants in the talks, while sketching out a possible vision for that type of approach. That stimulated a very intense and, in my opinion, valuable discussion and many constructive

oral and written observations from the parties. We met the sides during the day and in the evening to answer their queries and urge them to indicate the basis of their own participation in the expert consultative process. That enabled us to move beyond the paper and the initial set of ideas that we had prepared, and to focus on the real deliverable, which was establishing a consultative process at the technical level as an additional, effective new tool and piece of architecture in the intra-Syrian talks process.

Participants wasted no time and on 19 May agreed on two separate technical meetings with experts from my own team. The first would be with experts from the Government, which until then had hesitated with respect to entering into any kind of expert group, and the second with experts from the delegation of the Syrian opposition that was announced on 11 February. Two additional technical aspect meetings were also held under the consultative process on 19 May with the Cairo and the Moscow platforms, respectively. The meetings were businesslike, constructive and informative. We can now say that the process is up and running, and it has already shown its own potential.

We also had constructive discussions on trying to find a formula through which experts from the Cairo and the Moscow platforms might join, at least, the expert meetings of the delegation of the Syrian opposition announced with its own composition on 11 February. Intensive conversations on that took place within the main opposition and between it and all the platforms, and we should encourage them to make that a reality during the next round. That would send an important new message of the opposition's unity.

As members of the Security Council know and have mentioned, the opposition has indicated that I should invite the High Negotiations Committee and the Cairo and the Moscow platforms. We have all thought and hoped that, one day — at least, with regard to some technical areas — that could be the beginning of their sharing a common pool of ideas. That might be an initial step towards a common understanding concerning some of the issues, and international and regional actors, such as the members of the Security Council, in my opinion, should do everything that they can to support it so that we might enjoy a unified opposition as soon as possible. Although we realize that it is not an immediate prospect — as borne out by the fact that we cannot see it happening immediately — we hope that it would bring us closer to the possibility

of direct negotiations between the Government and the opposition.

I would like to thank once again the Women's Advisory Board, which has been providing valuable feedback on the United Nations proposal with regard to a technical consultation process. In fact, it came up with many valid ideas that we were able to use, as well as timely and constructive suggestions concerning the process, in general, with a view to making it as inclusive as possible for all Syrian men and women. Furthermore, today, in two hours, I will begin engagement in a series of in-depth consultations with representatives of Syrian civil society. They are important, particularly at the point at which we have arrived. Such consultations have already provided us with much insightful and practical advice.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and express appreciation for the support of the members of the Council, who actively participated in Geneva, the International Syrian Support Group and the other countries that have dispatched their own senior officials or envoys for Syria to the Geneva talks. Their close involvement and efforts in consulting with me and engaging the sides so as to bring them closer to a possible formula remain an invaluable tool of diplomatic leverage for my own mediation efforts. I also welcome the fact that, regardless of what side of the conflict the groups were closer to, they all welcomed and supported some of the United Nations proactive, concrete proposals to the parties.

Before concluding, I should like to add a few important points of clarification concerning the meetings of experts so as to be clear about what they are and what they are not, and, importantly, what the link with the four baskets is and what it could be.

First, the meetings of experts are not intended to replace formal negotiations. That process is intended to support the four baskets and the principle of parallelism, which remain the focus of the talks' agenda. We agreed on that. The work of the experts remain fully framed within the terms of reference, which we all know as the intra-Syrian talks. We were unable to enter into in-depth discussions on the four baskets during that round, but we spoke of important issues concerning both parties. We hope to address those more substantially during the next round of talks.

Secondly, our focus on constitutional, legal issues does not in any way take away the Syrian people's right

to draft and determine their own constitutional future. We do not seek to draft a new Syrian constitution in Geneva, Astana or anywhere else. Instead, we are laying the foundations for when the Syrians are able to do so. Nevertheless, in Geneva the United Nations is ready to help prepare the ground for that because much homework remains to be done.

Thirdly, any legally and constitutionally solid framework agreement will require an important underlying technical structure and details. We hope that the experts can work continuously through those details together or separately. In that regard, I have also strongly encouraged the experts to hold meetings between the rounds of the Geneva talks, not just during them. However, if anyone wants to meet only during the talks, they are welcome. The experts will not make any decisions, but rather propose options — solid, well thought out and thoroughly discussed options — to the official participants in the formal talks.

Naturally a great deal of work remains to be done. We are aware that important gaps remain among the parties with regard to major issues, but we have established an agenda, gone into substance on all baskets and taken a new, further step towards preparing the ground for real negotiations, which, I hope, will be possible in the near future. For the first time, we have received the consent of all parties to engage with us on an expert, solid and concrete level. Furthermore, I am pleased that all parties were receptive to the United Nations convening a seventh round that we intend to schedule some time in June.

The United Nations in Geneva has begun to help the Syrian parties to put the building blocks in place for real negotiations on a real political solution, while we hope that Astana will contribute to ensuring that the de-escalation works. During the past few weeks, several important meetings of key international and regional leaders that are taking place as we speak and will take place in various capitals have all produced important statements on the need to find a political solution in Syria. With the help of the Council and the Secretary-General's guidance, we are doing our part to incrementally find a political agreed framework in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

We reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and his entire team. We thank them for their tireless efforts and their willingness to push ahead, in spite of the notorious obstacles that repeatedly emerge.

We welcome the fact that yet another round of negotiations has taken place and that some progress made on the four baskets of issues on the Geneva agenda, in particular with regard to the drafting of a new constitution. Nonetheless, it is important to step up efforts and set earlier deadlines to achieve a political transition that would gradually restore a sense of normalcy to the country. Once again, we reiterate our conviction that there is no military solution to the conflict and that we will be able to emerge from this labyrinth and put an end to the humanitarian tragedy only through a process of political transition agreed to by the Syrian people and with mediation by the United Nations. We trust that unilateral action that would prevent us from reaching that goal will be avoided, which would give the Security Council greater credibility as a key player in resolving the crisis.

As we mentioned on previous occasions, the United Nations and the Special Envoy are not protagonists in the tragedy that has been occurring in Syria since 2011; they are merely mediators, assisting the parties to the conflict. The primary responsibility for ending the conflict lies directly with the Syrian people, and in particular with the Government, on the one hand, and all individuals and entities that make up the opposition, including armed groups, on the other. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy to ensure that the process towards a political transition in Syria is genuinely inclusive and we commend him on his commitment to working with large sections of Syrian civil society, religious leaders and women's groups. Third States — those in the region and outside of it that are direct or indirect participants in the situation in Syria — also bear responsibility in the conflict.

In that regard, Uruguay understands that the Security Council's responsibility in this issue is to continue putting pressure on and persuading the parties to remain at the negotiating table and make gradual and tangible progress on the road map outlined in resolution 2254 (2015). It is essential now more than ever to strengthen political will in the various multilateral forums in which the Syrian crisis is discussed — the Security Council, negotiations in Geneva and the Astana process. The memorandum that established four safe

zones in Syria, signed in early May in Astana, appears to have been a step forward towards achieving the goal of strengthening the ceasefire and in reducing the extremely high levels of violence in the majority of areas in Syria.

Although we do not yet have detailed information on how the agreement will be implemented, we are nonetheless concerned that, thus far, provisions have not been made for the unimpeded access of the United Nations to the interior of those zones. It is essential that humanitarian access be guaranteed and that the civilian population be allowed to move freely and be able to enter and leave those areas, as they please.

The Syrian crisis, with its high economic and humanitarian costs, has led to the spread of a even more extremist type of terrorism, which creates greater instability in the Middle East and throughout the world. After more than six years of war, a peaceful solution to the conflict in Syria is a moral imperative for the Council and for the entire international community. We urge the parties to the conflict — those that have influence with them and those that, in one way or another, take part in the conflict — to cease hostilities, engage in good-faith negotiations, and reach an agreement that would allow the Syrian people to open a new chapter on peace and national reconciliation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We are grateful to Special Envoy De Mistura for his continued efforts and commitment to the political resolution of the Syrian conflict.

We regret the fact that the latest round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva did not bring much progress. A breakthrough did not happen because the main ingredient for a sustainable solution — trust — is missing. The lack of trust is poisoning the current environment and dooms the Syrian people to more suffering. We are appalled by the reports that the Syrian regime is now using cremation to hide mass murders at Sednaya prison, where thousands are believed to have been executed.

The general idea of de-escalation zones is welcome; however, the devil is always in the details. Thus far, we are short of them. Still, we support all efforts that

genuinely seek to de-escalate violence in Syria and guarantee sustainable humanitarian access. However, any talk on de-escalation zones is meaningless without a credible enforcement mechanism. Forgive me for being frank, but we really do not see how this ceasefire/de-escalation is any different from the previous initiatives that ultimately failed. The general idea does not seem to be new — we witness a short period of calm followed by another wave of escalation, when the regime feels prepared for a new major offensive at a time and location of its choosing. We have yet to hear what the real tools are to prevent such a scenario from recurring.

Another problem is the Syrian regime's commitment to fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), which is clearly lacking now. In the meantime, the regime and its allies are using the de-escalation agreement to shift focus to the east, trying to seize ground from anti-ISIS rebel forces in Al-Badia. How else would one interpret the numerous attacks by the pro-regime forces on multiple fronts against the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which is waging a relentless war on ISIS? Here are the words of Tlass Salameh, a commander of one of the FSA units that is leading the fight against ISIS:

"The regime is trying to cut us off from our front line with ISIS because they want to be the ones to move from the southern desert up towards eastern Syria and Deir ez-Zor. Imagine that — they have ISIS behind them and instead they are bombing us, the ones fighting ISIS there."

If anything, it only proves yet again that the regime is sticking to its long-standing strategy of using military force to eliminate the Syrian opposition instead of ISIS. Indeed, the fight against ISIS has always been secondary to the regime and its allies. Why is that? Perhaps Damascus wants to leave the international community with a difficult choice: Al-Assad or ISIS. It is therefore imperative that the Council make absolutely sure that the de-escalation zones are not used as yet another tool of the regime and its allies to regroup forces and prepare for an assault.

Finally, we remain convinced that unless serious pressure is applied on Damascus and an accountability mechanism is established in Syria, we will not see any progress on the political track.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks the Special

Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing. Once again, we express our support for his efforts.

We welcome the outcome of the sixth round of peace talks, held in Geneva last week under the auspices of the United Nations, on the four baskets of issues referring to governance, constitution, elections and the fight against terrorism. At the same time, we highlight the willingness demonstrated by the parties involved. Similarly, we commend the leadership shown by the Special Envoy in establishing an additional mechanism to strengthen the peace talk — meetings with experts on legal and constitutional experts to foster and facilitate the process of political dialogue in Syria.

We also highlight and praise the great step forward taken by the guarantors of the ceasefire — Russia, Iran and Turkey — during the Astana meeting on 4 May, in which a memorandum to create four de-escalation and safe zones was adopted with a view to preventing incidents and putting an immediate end to any kind of armed confrontation, as well as to improving the unconditional deployment of humanitarian assistance and to creating conditions favourable to progress toward reaching a political solution to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. That achievement strengthened the guidelines of resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2336 (2016), and was recognized by the Secretary-General in his press statement of 4 May as an encouraging measure.

We note with great hope that the parties involved, the regional actors and the ceasefire guarantors are taking specific actions to strengthen the path towards political dialogue and to maintain the ceasefire, which has been the most long-lasting since the beginning of the conflict and which, fortunately, has remained stable as a result of the joint efforts of Russia, Turkey, Iran and Kazakhstan. In that regard, we reiterate our call on the parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons once and for all and refrain from any belligerent behaviour, because a political process is the only way to resolve this conflict.

Despite that remarkable process, we see that completely illegal, unilateral military actions are still occurring, not only affecting the stability of the political process and the agreements designed to strengthen it, but also undermining the sovereignty and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and Government efforts to combat Da'esh. We reiterate and stress that we must not allow unilateral actions that contravene the

principles of the Charter of the United Nations to be an obstacle to reaching peace in Syria, to the detriment of the lives of its inhabitants — all the more so when such actions are taken by actors outside the process of the political dialogue.

Lastly, we express our support for continued dialogue, both in Geneva in June and in Astana in July, and the result thereof, which would be a process led by and for the Syrian people with respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of that country.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. De Mistura, for his update. We have always believed that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that dialogue is, therefore, the only path to peace. Kazakhstan therefore commends the Special Envoy for his efforts to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria, and for his steadfast commitment and indomitable determination, which have enabled the international community to come this far. His input into the Astana talks, which are intended to support the Geneva process, have, therefore, facilitated the search for common political ground as well as the respect of the ceasefire for humanitarian purposes.

Nonetheless, we find that the Geneva talks have experienced difficulties. Although no one has been expecting miracles, we share the view of the Special Envoy that the parties to the conflict now have a clear agenda to pursue a political solution. We applaud the parties to the Geneva negotiations for demonstrating political maturity and for undertaking efforts to implement the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015).

Kazakhstan has high regard for all of the efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran to consolidate the ceasefire in the Syrian Arab Republic through the launching of the Astana process between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the armed opposition groups. Those countries, with their in-depth knowledge of and enviable expertise in the political and humanitarian situation on the ground, have succeeded in bringing the parties to the negotiating table under the most complex and sensitive conditions.

We also value highly the participation of the observers from the United States of America and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the recent Astana meeting. We believe that rapid, safe and unhindered

humanitarian access should be provided. Meanwhile, the conditions necessary for the delivery of medical aid to the local population should be created so as to meet the basic needs of civilians. Furthermore, Kazakhstan remains committed to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as to ensuring the continuity of State institutions.

Kazakhstan welcomes the adoption of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed in Astana on 4 May. It will surely decrease the hostilities between the parties to the conflict. We attach the utmost importance to compliance with ceasefire agreements by the parties to the conflict and their enforcement by guarantor States. All agreements reached in Astana must not simply remain on paper; instead, they must produce tangible results if the credibility of the world community and the Syrian people involved in the negotiation process is to be maintained.

The Astana talks form an integral part of Geneva process. Geneva is the main venue for negotiations

on the Syrian settlement under the auspices of the United Nations, where the political part of the agenda is discussed. However, it is important to understand that the success of the Geneva process is intertwined with the results of negotiations in the Kazakh capital. Kazakhstan welcomes the efforts of the Special Envoy and the results of the sixth round of the intra-Syrian negotiations, which were held from 16 to 19 May in Geneva.

Finally, Kazakhstan is ready to support Mr. Staffan de Mistura in his efforts to continue negotiations in Geneva and in Astana. We call on the Council to do everything possible to assist him in achieving the speedy cessation of bloodshed and a peaceful settlement of the situation in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more speakers inscribed on my list.

I now invite the members of the Council to continue informal consultations so as to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.